

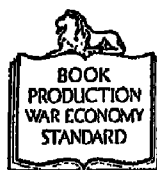
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IN THE WAKE OF THE
GOOSE-STEP



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IN THE WAKE OF THE GOOSE-STEP

by
FILIPPO BOJANO

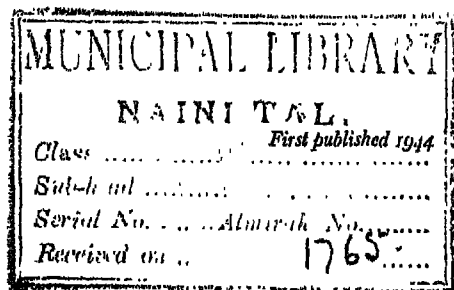
Translated from the Italian by
GERALD GRIFFIN



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PREFACE

ONE afternoon last September I was at the house of one of my friends and the conversation turned on the stormy developments in Italy. We were discussing the latest radio and press news about the conclusion of the armistice between the Allies and the Badoglio Government and about the end of the so-called Axis. It sounded like sweet music to my soul to learn that the Axis was finished. For eight years I had been anticipating that it was bound to crash. Those colleagues who shared with me the troubles and vicissitudes of that long period, especially in Berlin, and those friends who know my inmost feelings on the subject, know that from its very inception I regarded "the steel pact" between Hitler and Mussolini as a monstrous alliance whose terms were inconsistent with the teachings and the verdict of history, and that I maintained that it would assuredly entail the ruin of Italy. Unfortunately, my forecast proved only too true.

As a matter of fact, Italy, after having suffered so many disasters for which Fascism was to blame, and after shaking off its incubus, has been clamped in the grip of other fetters of quite a different kind—the fetters which had been prepared for her by our implacable enemies who yesterday called themselves our allies, but who to-day have thrown off the mask, and think of nothing but of destroying the Italian nation and the Italian peoples.

Somebody suggested that I should embody in a book of memoirs and comments the material which I got together, living as I did, not through any desire of mine, in that atmosphere of political intoxication that was known under the name of "The Axis". While in the past I was reluctant to publish anything of the kind, as it seemed to me to be a futile and too "personal" task, I consider that, on the contrary, to-day it is my duty to do so. The pages I have written are the narrative of one who "has seen"; they are the story of a country that has undergone tragic vicissitudes, and in this

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story is incorporated, merely for the purpose of authentic and first-hand testimony, the considerably less important story of my travels and of my most recent personal experiences.

As I wrote I could not control the bitterness that overcomes a man when he thinks, in enforced exile, of his own crucified country which he will see again God alone knows when.

Italy, which was the joy of my youthful days and throughout all my working years was my most cherished inspiration, is undergoing torture at this moment when she is hoping to escape from her bitter agony to awaken to a new life. I feel sanguine that the hour of her resurrection will come.

But when the Italians return to the light of liberty they must shed all dangerous illusions, and dropping the pompous childish slogans which were specially identified with Fascism, they must in future tread the path of a life of self-knowledge, hard work and reconstruction, following the precedent of the noblest traditions of their race. Italy must learn in future to cherish her own peace jealously, once more giving proof of her nobler creative capabilities in the field of true and indestructible civilization.

Chapter I

CLOUDY DAWN

ONE depressing foggy January morning in 1929 I left Arnaldo Mussolini's office in the Via Moscow in Milan, on my way to inform my relatives and friends of my imminent journey to the German capital, to take up the job of political correspondent on the daily, *Popolo d'Italia*, which, as everybody knows, belonged to the Duce and was the most important organ of the Fascist régime. I had no premonition of many things that happened afterwards. To begin with, I could not foresee that this would be the longest and most momentous of all my spells of exile, that I was destined to remain in Germany for the greatest part of my working life, and that Fate was about to cast my lot amid happenings that were destined to be of historic significance. To-day circumstances no longer make such protracted spells of service necessary, but at that period and in the decades before it, it frequently happened that a journalist was allowed to vegetate and grow old in a foreign country in one permanent job, termed in journalistic jargon "a position of trust". Such journalists were regarded, so to speak, as fixed and changeless institutions in foreign lands, and often died in exile, utterly forgotten. They were in a position analogous to that of certain plants that acquire a special environment from which they must not be removed under any circumstances for the rest of their existence.

I had only just returned from my trips to Spain, Hungary and the United States, with my mind a jumble of visions and problems, and almost miraculously had escaped joining Nobile's expedition to the North Pole, in which another journalist, a younger man who went instead of me, who had made a very happy marriage and had prospects of a very brilliant career, sacrificed his life. Perhaps it was the fact that I had escaped from such a dramatic end that made me look upon

this tragic incident as a warning, and induced me to accept the offer of a transfer to Berlin and to give up my nomad career.

On February 2, 1929, the train deposited at Anhalt Station, after a fatiguing journey through endless snowy tracts, my frozen and rather diffident self and my imposing luggage.

It was not my first trip to Berlin. I had been there twice before, the first time with Italo Balbo, who was making feverish preparations for his transatlantic flights on two of which I had the pleasure of accompanying him. I had also a number of acquaintances in Berlin, who had followed the time-honoured custom of initiating me into the varied, noisy and cosmopolitan life of the great metropolis. But this time things were changed. I had come to Berlin to work there. It was essential that I should learn the language as quickly as possible in order to be in a position to carry out the task assigned to me.

To tell the truth, I did not make much headway; but what was the little that I could then accomplish in the way of live-wire journalism in comparison with the experience which I was destined to accumulate during twelve years? I can smile to-day, looking back at it all. What callow inexperience in those early days marked my journalistic judgment, and what doubts cramped my style as a political correspondent! Germany, that vast stretch of territory situated in the heart of Europe, which throughout the centuries has made its unmistakable personality felt by its neighbours, sometimes with wars and sometimes with congresses, in which it tried to assert its despotic will—Germany, whose eternal demands and whose ever more exacting aspirations have produced at all periods of medieval and modern history turbulent territorial expansions, far-reaching revolutionary upheavals, and an eternal stamp of instability. Germany seemed to me like an inextinguishable volcano. She had lost a war, and in spite of that, or rather for that very reason, the eyes of all nations were focused on her; she kept people continuously talking about her, and forced so many statesmen by her dangerous insistence to work themselves into hysterics in their efforts to guarantee to future nations the longest possible period of

reconstructive peace without the dread of fresh alarms. Crushed and humiliated by her defeat, Germany still continued to be a source of uncertainty and danger. Not being a state on the outer fringe of our continent, and not regarding itself even under its prostrate condition as a conquered and subjugated nation, of rather insignificant geographical, ethnical and political importance which could easily be subdued; feeling convinced also that its temporary collapse was due to incidental factors which did not imply military inferiority, the German nation had made extreme caution essential in the application of the peace clauses, and any relaxation of the vigilance of the victors would have been out of the question. In short, Germany was a serious source of anxiety for the European chancelleries. We did not discuss the suggestion of Geneva being called upon to supervise this task of revision and of guarantees—a task in the core of which, like a great cloud which the sun will not disperse, the terrible reality of Germany brooded over us. I used to conjure up in my mind the anxieties of the cabinets of Paris, London, Prague and Warsaw on this urgent problem and on this seething unrest with its undercurrent of the possibility of an attempt at a German come-back. The victors never felt quite secure, although they made a show of feeling secure at Versailles and at Geneva, and sometimes seemed to cherish the illusion that they had rendered their age-long enemy innocuous for a considerable number of years. Clemenceau wore himself out with the eternal obsession that he was leaving as a legacy to his successors a task which it was almost impossible to carry out. He had a premonition that a second conflagration more serious than the previous one was bound to come. For this reason he was in a constant state of anxiety during his last years, and left a legacy of similar anxiety to the men who took his place in a France over which a sword of Damocles was ever hanging. Finally, in London, the same state of affairs existed, because the various Governments that followed one another never lost sight of Berlin. The only difference was that the British rulers sometimes thought that they could keep the wild beast quiet by wise diplomacy.

What was the attitude of Germany during those years just after the war, as seen by a journalist anxious to grasp it? Was the revolution which it had undergone in exchanging its imperial and autocratic constitution for a republican and democratic one a genuinely radical and fundamental change, or was it brought about by circumstances? Was it merely a provisional metamorphosis—a surgical operation, which did not heal the national malady, but merely lessened its virulence for a short spell? Was Germany's new policy sincere in its assertion that it desired to take its place in the vast scheme of general European reconstruction, and that it had stifled its age-old imperialistic yearnings, and was anxious to establish harmonious relations with the rest of Europe? Everything seemed to indicate that this assumption was correct. Apart from the moral grievance which Germany, at any rate, openly proclaimed—and for which she did not succeed in obtaining redress—that she had been arraigned as guilty before the great tribunal of history—the Reich seemed to adapt itself with resignation to its new destiny. It could be regarded as quite natural that at Geneva Stresemann fought to the best of his ability and with great vehemence to secure a remission for his own nation of at least a part of the material grievances imposed on it at Versailles, and first of all, to get the burden of German Reparations reduced. Any statesman would have adopted a similar attitude in defence of his own country. But it can be affirmed that the story of the German revival began with Stresemann, because, to sum up, it was he who rendered the first priceless services to Germany that enabled her to raise her head again. The Nazis were wrong in their anxiety to consign to oblivion the very name as well as the work of this first genuine German patriot; they should have revered him as their standard-bearer.

In my opinion, Stresemann should have been placed at the top of the roll of those men who devoted their lives to the restoration of Germany to its former greatness, and who took very effective steps in that direction. And if Stresemann was able to play the role of the tractable man, of the astute diplomat, of the man who, at the table of the League of Nations,

succeeded in pitting his own logical acumen against the mordant wit of Briand; and if it might be said that he joined the ranks of the liberal rebuilders of European fame, for this very reason his work was of importance; it should be observed that it would have been impossible for him to have acted differently. The German rulers of that period had no other choice, with a Germany incapable of evolving a Prussian and military policy in the true sense of the word. The wound was still bleeding; the German people were too much split up into the countless ideologies which were the aftermath of the revolution, and they were too disorganised. But political critics throughout the Reich put their fingers on the sore when they asserted that Germany had not been conquered—that is to say, that she had not been beaten in the field, but that it was the disintegration of the Home Front that had led to the general collapse. There was something very symptomatic in this assertion, for it meant that as they did not consider themselves beaten, the German people would some day put the matter to the test again—a culmination which in reality nobody ruled out, but which everybody thought was still far away in the dim future.

When I arrived in Germany a long time had already elapsed since the date of the famous Constitution of Weimar. Ebert's, Rathenau's and Scheidemann's governments were just cyclones that came and went. Even the saddler Ebert forgot, as time went on, his new revolutionary tendencies. Governments of various types ran their courses with their respective chancellors, from Social Democratic to Catholic Centre, and Germany was slowly reverting to her Prussian outlook. The Leander division assumed the proportions of an administrative detail, and the French government made a great show of endorsing the division of the Reich into two parts, a Northern and a Southern, while keeping an embassy at Berlin, and a legation at Munich with Vladimiro D'Ormesson as Minister—a most shrewd and ambitious diplomat and at the same time a doughty fighter. The Republic of Weimar stretched from the Baltic to the Alps, and it had a uniform policy which aimed, firstly, to maintain at all costs under all

governments national unity, and, secondly, to try to reduce to zero the Versailles sanctions. On that one point, despite their parliamentary squabbles, all parties were in full agreement.

To my great astonishment, shortly after my arrival, I read that the Communist party in the Reichstag had voted for the allocation of the money needed for laying down the first post-war armoured cruiser. The Communists, when it was a question of attacking the Right, were most emphatic and uncompromising radicals, but they would not allow themselves to be deprived of the glory of doing their share towards the rearmament of Germany. The basic cause of that long struggle which went on in the Reich between 1920 and 1933 was solely for the acquisition of power. The Left fought the Right and vice versa, following the normal rough and tumble of parliamentary struggle; on the other hand, some very strange alliances were formed, and such curious parliamentary proceedings took place that one was forced to ask oneself if the whole thing was not the performance of some farce.

The Right was already very powerful at that time although its membership was so small. The National organisation of Steel Helmets helped to swell its numbers. The Steel Helmets comprised in addition to the ex-soldiers, all the most reactionary elements in the country, the conservative landowners, the industrial magnates, the Junkers, and the traditionalists, the monarchists, and some of the Protestant clergy. All these diehards were loud in their denunciation of Stresemann, as it seemed to them that he made too many concessions to the Western Powers. They conjured up the spectre of Reparations in colossal proportions, knowing perfectly well all the time that not one penny of those Reparations would ever be paid. It was even possible for them to make their influence felt with regard to the post of President of the Republic. On this occasion Ebert's successor was old Marshal Hindenburg, the man who, in the past, had been a loyal supporter of the Kaiser, the leader in the Masurian Lakes campaign, a soldier, a Conservative of the first water, who knew just as much about politics as was consistent with his consciousness of being a

native of East Prussia—the most German and Nationalist of the provinces of the Reich.

Any foreign correspondent who happened to be in Germany during those years had been instructed to consider a meeting with Adolf Hitler as one of his chief professional duties. This man had become the most interesting figure in Germany. His name was on everybody's lips. The echoes of his vehement philippics against the political system of the day rang through the whole nation and even resounded beyond its frontiers. His book *Mein Kampf* was the theme of discussions everywhere. Like a conflagration started by a sudden thunderbolt, Hitler's fame had been established even before he was backed by a majority.

The fact that in Italy through the initiative of another man, Benito Mussolini, a movement called Fascism had sprung up, and that this movement had been powerful enough to revolutionise completely the order of things in the peninsula, helped to evoke a still greater interest throughout the world in the activities of the new German leader. In thunderous tones this man threatened, not that he too would march on Rome, but that he would start a revolution in the depths of Germany just as Luther with his preaching had convulsed and revolutionised the religious outlook of that people. In short, Hitler was a sensational phenomenon, and to treat him as of no account, even in those early days, would have been a journalistic oversight. In fact I was aware that American, English and French colleagues of mine had taken exceptional pains to get into contact with him. Special correspondents had come from the United States and from London for this very purpose. As Hitler never came to Berlin, I decided to write to his secretary, Rudolf Hess, requesting him to get me an interview. I got a rather strange reply which hurt my journalistic pride. The Fuehrer regretted that he could not grant me the interview which I requested, because he had a long time previously pledged his word that his first statements for publication in Italy should be given to another representative of my own paper, Eugenio Morreale, whom he had known in connection with a Munich court prosecution. But for quite a long time

Morreale had ceased to have anything to do with Germany, which was my special sphere of observation. Morreale was now our correspondent in Vienna, and I had to request him to release Hitler from his promise. He agreed, but rather reluctantly. A series of obstacles forced me to postpone my journey to Munich, and for more than a year nothing could be done. Eventually, one day in Berlin at the Kaiserhof, I got the interview to which I had been looking forward so long, and I found myself face to face with the chief of the Nazis. He said very little, and obviously felt great reluctance to talk about Mussolini and Fascism. The fact that Italy had very frequently intervened at Geneva through the medium of her representative in favour of a revision of the Clause dealing with German Reparations, seemingly left him quite indifferent. He was tremendously amused about the accusation made by his political opponents that he had received funds from Mussolini to finance the Nazi movement in its infancy—an accusation which was proved to be baseless. He frequently drew my attention to the fact that the last country in which *Mein Kampf* had been published was Italy. He sarcastically emphasised the fact that Mussolini and Fascism and Italy had no real objective for the armaments which the Duce was piling up. Mussolini, on the other hand, was constantly sneering at Nazism as a ridiculous plagiarism of Fascism; Italians were continually making jokes about Hitler's Charlie Chaplin moustache and his forelock straggling half-way down his forehead.

A period followed during which Hitler pretty often invited me to accompany him in his electioneering and propaganda campaigns through the German provinces. We travelled at lightning speed by plane and motor-car, and I had to spend my few hours of leisure from my daily tasks in exhausting journeys followed by tedious demonstrations in the company of Dietrich, Hanfstaengl, Brueckner, Schaub and the few others who constantly accompanied the Fuehrer. It was a rather instructive experience, which gave me an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with men who were destined later on to hold important posts under the régime of

Nazi Germany. Putzi Hanfstaengl always posed as having a very deep insight into Anglo-Saxon problems and Anglo-Saxon mentality. He was also considered by his companions to have a most profound all-round knowledge of things, but he was always silent when the conversation turned to Italy, because he knew nothing whatsoever about the country.

Brueckner, Schaub and Sandemann were simply Hitler's bodyguard—fellows who were just waiting for the moment when they could sit down at a table in a provincial restaurant to devour a luscious beef-steak and swill endless pints of beer. On one occasion Ebbutt of *The Times* accompanied me and shared with me the tedium of these electoral crusades. Hitler himself remained silent and motionless for hours on end when we were in an aeroplane, as if he were pondering on the tasks ahead of him. Every now and then he would emerge from his coma to stare fixedly at the aeronautical charts. He was almost always anxious that I should jump on the platform beside him at his meetings where seething masses of women were becoming ever more and more mesmerised by him as they listened to every word he uttered, and kept up a prolonged orgy of cheering when he had finished. Strange to say, Hitler's first supporters came from the masses of the female electorate. His first and most enthusiastic audiences consisted of women, and I am firmly convinced that the German women are least inclined of any to admit that Hitler's political career has been disastrous to Germany. Many of these women still expect that he will perform a miracle.

In the beginning I shared Mussolini's view that Hitler had a frustrated mentality which was enslaved by futile abstract ideas, and that he was a demagogue who was really not very dangerous, when he ranted like those visionaries who indulged in empty nothings to which people listened listlessly without taking the trouble to follow their tortuous logic. But later I had to change my estimate of Hitler, even though I had not then heard the famous verdict given by the surgeon Sauerbrück. Sauerbrück, who is a scientist, and knew Hitler from the days of his first groping for power, maintained that

the Fuehrer had latent symptoms of a rather dangerous type of semi-insanity. Indeed he was beginning to show that he was anxious to translate dreams into realities. It was obvious that he had a programme. Save for his obsession—which did not appeal to the mentality of Mussolini, who was known to be a man who liked realities—avoiding at all costs a bloody revolution, but rather climbing to power by a victory at the polls, Hitler showed that he was not only seeking results by means of the exposition of his doctrine, but already was revealing himself as a strategist in politics and a realist. The introductions to his speeches were always cloudy, but he came down to facts as he went on, and in his perorations he showed himself a skilful manœuvrer, if not a diplomatist. He was very impatient in imposing his will upon all comers.

When mention of France arose, even in private conversation, Hitler, unlike many German politicians, appeared to regard that nation as of very little importance either with regard to its political stability or its military strength. In those days, Mussolini likewise used to joke about France, and speak of it as a decadent country, which could not face the brunt of a new war. But Mussolini was ignorant of precise details, whereas Hitler spoke with a knowledge of cause and effect, and in the meantime went on completing his plans.

I saw immediately that this man was likely to land us in a war, with the usual German thoroughness improved by a more perfect technique which would take past mistakes into account. The adventure could not end with the laying down of a few maxims, with pitiful mouthings in the Reichstag and on the radio, full of insults levelled at the democracies, as well as such protests and ostentatious gestures as leaving the League of Nations and refusing to see Sir John Simon at Berlin. All this was like the prelude in some infernal orchestra to the violent action of the drama destined to follow sooner or later. A unique orchestra and a unique conductor! Sometimes the German people themselves, overwhelmed and carried away by this symphonic impetuosity, were seized with dizziness; they were in a position to grasp what Hitler was about to say, what he was aiming at and what vast schemes were being hatched

out in his mind. No doubt events were hastening towards the most radical revolution that history had known. It is possible—nay it is even certain—that Hitler was dreaming of realising his programme of conquest with extreme ease by relying above everything else on the unpreparedness of others. He had planned that his procedure should be progressive and methodical; no indefinite elements were to come into his calculations. First of all he contemplated setting up a gigantic war-machine on such a scale that its mere existence would make his opponents submit resignedly to the will of Germany. There was only one obstacle towards attaining this goal—England. But Hitler in the first years of his sway was definitely calculating on a resumption on a large scale of the submarine war, which he thought would be the surest means of reducing his dreaded rival to impotence.

I chanced to become friendly with a Flemish man who during those years acted as a translator for an important German firm—an eccentric sort of fellow who still kept up the manner and even the very garb of his University days at Heidelberg. In addition to other kinks, he was a heavy tippler. During the first world war he had escaped from Belgium to enlist in the Wehrmacht and fight against France. He never returned to Belgium because he had been condemned to death *in absentia*.

This fellow, who was quite a character, and appealed to me because he was not lacking in intelligence and seemed very sincere, had been in the habit of entertaining me many a long evening with a forecast of the coming era as he visualised it, basing his contentions on Hitler's theories. He had so thoroughly studied Hitler's doctrine that he had its original sources at his finger tips, so much so that he could tell you right away, for instance, where Hitler got this or that idea. In his opinion the climax would come when Germany would be in control of the whole world. As much of his work was done in close contact with people of prominence in the Nazi world, everyone of whom he knew, and as furthermore, considered as a source of copy, he would prove to be of great value, I listened to him with interest. The hub of the colossal and

complicated revolution, which he foreshadowed for me, would evolve from the two collateral movements—Nazism and Fascism. The whole revolution would have these two “Isms” as its pivot.

First of all, the Danubian and the Balkan regions would be absorbed by Germany, while Fascist Italy would have freed the Mediterranean from British domination. The next move would be a Nazi expedition against the East in deference to the old slogan, “The Drive to the East”. The liquidation of at least a part of this East in the first place would be relatively a simple matter. The next phase in this career of conquest would be the surrender of France to the will of Berlin and Rome. “The unwarlike French Government” would be unable to do anything to prevent it; in fact, owing to its blundering, it would facilitate the process of liquidation. When France was rendered powerless, Great Britain would find herself isolated, and her naval power, the only real obstacle to German hegemony, would be paralysed by a carefully planned submarine attack. There would no longer be any small nations except the handful whose continued existence would be of advantage to the two great victorious powers, Germany and Italy. I do not know on what grounds he constantly associated Italy with the Reich in this triumphal march across the prostrate nations. Perhaps it was in order to appeal to my patriotic sentiment, and, incidentally to give me pleasure. The poor dreamer had not the faintest suspicion that I was listening to him merely to study symptoms and tendencies from his priceless babble. It is remarkable that every contention of this Flemish dreamer was backed by documents. He showed me the extracts—the very cuttings from Hitlerian propaganda—and they were so arranged that they did not look like flour from his own bag, but rather like a perfect compendium of official statements. I could draw up a series of geographical tracts of territories that were to be liquidated. To be strictly accurate, some of his forecasts turned out later to be correct. The honest fellow was speaking with obvious sincerity and was a firm believer in Hitler.

His vision of the New Order did not end even with the Urals,

but he saw the Hitlerian expansion spreading to farther Siberian tracts in Eastern Asia, even to Vladivostock. He saw, furthermore, India invaded by the Wehrmacht with Gandhi as an accomplice, and he saw the whole Mussulman world paying obeisance to the New World Order. There are two outstanding points to be noted with regard to my Flemish friend's forecast. I later found the expression "The New Order" which he had used, repeated in the official pronouncements made by the German dictator. This dream of the New Order came very near to being translated into fact with the German victories in the autumn of 1939 and in the spring and summer of 1940. The Fleming was, indeed, not telling me any fairy tales. This complacent advance publicity agent of the doctrine and plans of the Hitlerian Nazis, who was my neighbour for so long, this simple scribe and editorial translator, who was then unknown to everybody, reaped his reward, and for three years held an important post in one of the countries conquered by Germany—a post over which a cloud of mystery hung, which I never succeeded in penetrating.

In those days I knew fellows in Germany who were all more or less of the pedantic doctrinaire type, who had learned their chief's gospel, and became its evangelists. Rudolph Hess was a typical specimen of them—in fact he belonged to the group of pioneers of Hitler's *evangel*. As a Latin I find it extraordinarily difficult to follow the philosophical maze of certain Nazi trends of reasoning. From what I gleaned from them in conversation I could only draw one inference. Germany was determined—had always been determined—to have a terrible revenge on her conquerors. The policy of Hitler and of Nazism is only a more modern, more sincere and more brutal expression of a mentality of revenge. Germany is not the type of nation to become resigned. Germany alone is capable of conceiving the idea of a complete, dramatic and bloody overthrow of the entire world, if such a sacrifice would serve her own special ends.

The merest germ of this conception began to develop in the earliest years of the Republic of Weimar, when everybody believed that Germany, humiliated and exhausted by the

first war and its bitter consequences, would decide to come to her senses. The conception arose from the conviction inherent in Germans that no people can perform such miracles as the German people, and that the whole world lacks the qualities and the powers needed to offer, even under the most favourable circumstances, a strong resistance to the onward march of the Teuton. Hitler knew how to exploit this Teutonic element by transforming it into a religion, and of this religion he made himself the prophet and the head. All the parallels from history that have been employed to describe Hitler do not seem to me so apt as one that suddenly came into my mind while I was listening to one of his usual philosophical tirades. Hitler patterned himself on Mahomet who spread the evangel of the Koran by marching sword in hand against the infidels at the head of his armies. Hitler's Koran is the New Order. Mussolini could not understand these two words, because he did not realise that Hitler's New Order was a thing to which Fascism would never have been able to give its co-operation on terms of absolute equality. It was nothing more than an exclusively German dream of conquest and aggrandisement.

It was revealing to hear Hitler speaking when he had no mob in front of him, and was just conversing with a few people. Then, abandoning the air and attitude of a demagogue with which he is wont to present himself to the public, he was just an ordinary man, and avoided rhetorical outbursts. Yet never was there a glimmer of any balanced estimate of events and situations, never a sincere admission and recognition of the inevitable. He never made a statement that was not full of acrimony, envy and hatred—profound hatred of his opponents. In fine, he never uttered a word of humility either with regard to himself, his country or his race. All his pronouncements exuded the spirit of strife, rivalry, the marshalling of armed forces and grandiose and fantastic plans for the future. On such occasions, too, his speech was aggressive and boastful, and there welled up in him from hidden depths in his soul an ever-increasing note of enthusiasm. But his voice had none of the reverberating roar of his public addresses. It seemed as

though he was arguing with himself about his plans for the future. His eyes flashed fire, indicating that he meant in his heart every word he spoke. His whole frame shook with tremors which were at times convulsive, and saliva streamed from the corners of his lips. This mental excitement became more obvious, however, when he spoke about Great Britain than when France was the subject of argument, as though he was conscious that he was confronting a more serious obstacle. Men of the type of Hitler and Mussolini, when faced with difficulties, arduous problems and dangers, instead of pondering over the situation confronting them, and controlling their emotions, become more and more excited and inflamed. It was quite obvious that Hitler saw that Great Britain was his most dangerous rival. In his subconscious mind at least he did not fail to have a premonition of that greater obstacle that his scheme which he had planned out such a long time in advance, would have to encounter. Like all the German people, Hitler could never understand why Great Britain should oppose the plans for German conquest.

Great Britain enjoys the paramount privilege of her insular status, and is in a position to live in her splendid isolation, in which, if she only desired to do so, she could carry on with serene indifference to everything that happens on the Continent. Furthermore, Great Britain has on tap the wealth of her vast dominions abounding in raw materials, and she has a formidable fleet for the protection of her Empire. Why is it not possible, the Germans and Hitler wonder, that two vast empires should exist side by side, a British Empire covering the seas and her distant dominions, and a German Empire spread over the European and Asiatic Continents? Ask any individual German at random, and he will reflect the attitude of the majority of his fellow-countrymen by expressing his amazement that such a combination has been made impossible owing to the stubborn opposition of the English. When the Germans talk about a "Welt-Anschauung", which means, of course, the purely German conception of the world, it must be borne in mind that to every Teutonic mind the Welt-Anschauung is axiomatic, and that not only is it intolerable,

but it is incomprehensible that the rest of mankind should not recognise its incontrovertible justice.

Naturally, Hitler does not always proclaim and criticise; now and then he laughs at this silly world which persists in not understanding him. His laughs are sardonic, expressive of scorn and pity. His closest co-operators, carried away by him, under the spell of the overwhelming power of his eloquence, and deceived by a show of deep-felt conviction which seems to be based on secret definite information, are no longer masters of their own reason. They are just echoes—automatic recorders of his every word and gesture. Dietrich, who has the task of controlling the Press of the Reich, and who is to-day the Under-Secretary and Reichsleiter, is utterly lacking in any trace of independence of outlook. Furthermore, he does not show any particular ability; it would be impossible to find a more complete serf, one more completely under the thumb of his master. I shall have something to say about the others later on; they are just a collection of invertebrate leaders without any trace of ability, and as propagandists and advance agents of Hitler's idea more pedantic morons could not be found.

Now to touch upon my impressions of those days. Hitler's programme had been fully drawn up in all its details at the very beginning of his assumption of the role of ruler of the nation. I propose a brief survey of the foreign and European policy of Nazi Germany. Since to fulfil his complete programme of conquest right away would have been impossible, Hitler deliberately planned in advance to put off the Western Powers with fair promises, by assuring them that the *status quo* would be respected, at least in Western Europe. He saw no reason for Great Britain and France to be alarmed if Germany, who had emerged from the Great War impoverished, and who was lacking supplies of many raw materials, should have shown a desire to expand eastwards. This need of German expansion towards the East was dealt with exhaustively in a voluminous mass of political writings which appeared in Germany immediately after the War.

Sert's plan was well known in Europe and outside Europe.

Since the most burning and painful amputations had been made on Germany precisely in the East, why should not Germany's right to seek reparations in that particular zone be recognised? Immediately after the Treaty of Versailles German propaganda hastened to express pity for the outraged peoples of the German race who had been placed under a foreign yoke in Upper Polish Silesia, in Dantzig, in the Sudeten area, in Memel, and in that vast tract of East Prussia which had been cut off from the Fatherland through the medium of the Corridor, now given to Poland. It is certain that these complaints and lamentations uttered in an aggrieved tone, supplemented by statements that the Allies had not only been unjust, but too hasty and lacking in circumspection in their splitting up and allotting of territories, with detriment above all to ethnical values and rights, succeeded in touching certain sentimental hearts. Such amputations, it was asserted, aimed not merely at punishing Germany for having caused the war, but they had bred despair among the innocent inhabitants of those provinces. I cannot recall how many times I was invited to visit the Polish frontier, but I remember very clearly how dramatically all these blunders and errors were pointed out to me. These were the foundations on which Hitler built up Germany's political renaissance. It is remarkable how, on the eve of making one of his sudden surprise swoops, he invariably repeated once more to France his eternal promise to leave her in peace, and his intention of making no changes in the West. It was a gauche way of lulling France's suspicions which ought to have alarmed her and inspired those who could do so, to thwart the particular coup he was planning at the time.

But if some proposal were made by the Western Powers, if even half of what he asked were suggested in a conciliatory tone in order to calm the frenzy in Berlin, Hitler made a practice of beginning to haggle. He pointed out that the proposed settlement ought to have originated from him, and it would have to be thought out and elaborated in the course of his long monologues before the big map of Europe, all criss-crossed with notes of interrogation and marginal notes that

hung in his study. Whether from suspicion that he might be double-crossed, or whether it was that he preferred to have the initiative in his own hands, Hitler never yielded to any proposal coming from the Chancelleries of Paris or London. He paid no attention of any sort to the small nations, and did not care whether they agreed with him or not, or whether any one of them, when marked down by him, should protest or appeal. He made light of anything that was said at Geneva, because, according to his way of looking at it, the League of Nations could not be considered as a vital and efficient organisation. He just regarded it as an arcopagus of futile babbling.

Undoubtedly by 1934—that is to say, barely a year after his accession to power—the Chief of Nazism had made up his mind to let Europe and the world realise that Germany, having raised its head in a very positive way, would be able, step by step, but, for all that, with comparative speed, to assert her absolute supremacy over Europe. In the first place came the secret sensational arming of the German nation so as to meet with no competition or opposition of any kind. In the second place, the liberation of all the regions declared by Germany, whether on the grounds of a historical valuation, or on the grounds of traditions and ethnical arguments that were adduced, as rightly forming part of German territory. This crusade of liberation would probably have presented Germany with the chance of extending her domain even over territories to the East that were not German at all. This happened, for instance, subsequently in the case of the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Poland, both of which were premeditated. Next would come the second part of the programme—to wit, the attack on the West. Such an attack would have meant the breaking of the promises made to France and Belgium, but what do promises and treaties stand for in Hitler's estimation? He has violated them one after another. It is like plucking the petals of a daisy one by one slowly, and watching them scattering along the ground, until nothing is left but the calix, adhering to the stalk. So were all the ideals cherished at Geneva brutally scattered to the winds—the building up of a

system of collective security, the observance of pledges that had been given, and the principle of disarmament. Nazi Germany never intended to observe even one of these international agreements. Pre-Nazi Germany, less categorical in her contempt for such pledges, made a pretence of observing them only in so far as they might serve her as a guarantee—and above all, in order to gain time.

Italy and Fascism were never highly regarded in the German camp. I began to notice this in the early days of my long residence in Germany, and that was before the advent of Hitler. If Germans were Social Democrats from an apparently ideological and doctrinaire motive they had to repudiate Fascism, and denounce the changes brought about in Italy by Mussolini. They appeared to harbour bad feeling against Mussolini, who had been a strict Socialist, for having abjured that ideology to throw himself into Sorel's arms. Mussolini's attacks against class warfare and Marxism antagonised every Socialist and democratic conscience, beginning with those of Germany, where these ideologies originated under the ægis of Karl Marx. But the antipathy was of a rather passive kind and took the guise of indifference. The Social-Democratic Press, which was the official Press of the Republic of Weimar, with its chief organ *Vorwärts*, derided the changes which were gradually wrought by Fascism, and described the corporative state as the work of a dilettante. The Communists, as may well be imagined, did not let the opportunity pass of hurling abuse at Rome. But the strangest thing was that the German Right were still more spiteful against Mussolini. This was not on account of Fascism, to which the Right gave little thought, but on account of territory known as the Alto Adige. To them Italy was the nation that had broken away from the Triple Entente and gone over to the Allies, an affront which the German mentality could never forgive.

To make her criminal record still blacker, the Right remembered that Italy had annexed the provinces considered by the Germans as their own territory. That France should have annexed Alsace-Lorraine did not seem to them so unjust and

absurd as this rape of the Alps, entailing an outrage on an ethnically German population. To try to explain why Italy went over to the side of the Allies and expound Italy's right to her natural frontiers was mere waste of energy in those circles in which I mixed in Berlin. Being well aware that Italy in reality was not a great political force and was relegated to a post of secondary importance in the list of the victorious nations, and being fully informed about the distrust and uneasiness that prevailed between Paris and Rome, and, consequently between Fascism and the French Popular Front, the men of the Right in Germany surmised that by keeping their fingers pointed towards the Alto Adige, they were taking aim at a very weak and delicate spot. In picking out the points of minor resistance and in taking advantage of them Germany has always been supreme.

In reality there was no doubt about the feelings of the conservative and traditionalist elements in the Reich; to them Italy was just a renegade who had gained unfair profits. The military section which was allied to the Conservative party shared their anti-Italian rancour. But how drastically had the military forces been whittled down! They now comprised an army of 100,000 men which Versailles has agreed to let Germany have, but an army of the very highest quality, formed by Seeckt with a very clear insight into the future. And in addition to this picked embryo of what was to be the future Wehrmacht, there was the unlimited band of discharged soldiers, the organisation of the Steel Helmets, headed by Seldte, a haughty professor of what Prussian militarism had always been and always will be. They were not very enamoured of Italy, but it is still more strange that Italy, notwithstanding its Fascist baptism, was not greeted with any affection by budding Nazism. A rivalry had arisen between Hitler and Mussolini on the issue of priority. It was just a simple matter of dates. Hitler took the credit of having, in the fortress of Landsberg, first developed the idea of a grand national movement on anti-democratic and authoritarian lines. But Mussolini had established his system in the March of 1919.

This similarity which had suddenly been discovered between Fascism and National Socialism could not possibly form a link between the two movements. A streak of jealousy and envy was obvious in Hitler's attitude, despite the fact that when speaking on the subject he always avoided making any display of his real feelings. How easily Mussolini had been able to attain his goal, Hitler reflected with bitterness, and how heart-felt was his ambition to do likewise! If only old Hindenburg had not been so stubborn as to see in National Socialism a dangerous extremist tendency, if the aged Field-Marshal had not permitted himself to be so utterly fooled by his generals and his friends among landed gentry such as Oldenburg and Januschau, and had shown the same realistic spirit and the same liberalism as Victor Emmanuel!

In the year 1932, which was the year before his appointment as Chancellor, the Fuehrer was summoned to Hindenburg, who wanted to know what really was the aim of his intensive revolutionary activity, and whether he would be satisfied with a ministerial seat in the Government just then in power. Hitler replied, "What I wish is that your Excellency should grant me the same authority as Mussolini holds in Italy." Hindenburg had no alternative but to show the door to the exasperated leader of the Nazis.

Nevertheless, it is incredible that the precedent afforded by Fascism in Italy when it gained power and freed itself from all the other parties was not of advantage to Hitler. It is obvious that he must have felt rather flattered by it as far as he himself was concerned, for the basic idea of the two movements, of the two revolutionaries, was the same. It is quite true that Mussolini did not like to hear people talking about Hitler's revolution, because in his opinion revolution meant fighting and daring, not merely electoral conflicts. But for Hitler it was quite a different matter. He was obliged to make use of the Fascist precedent in support of his own thesis. Whether in public or at the meetings of the directorate of his party, he passed over this theme in silence. Nazism won the battle in January, 1933, following a party game between Hindenburg, Hitler, Goering, and Von Papen. At that time Fascism had

not only been entrenched in power for more than ten years, but had achieved a great many things, including the Charter of Labour, and it had concluded the Concordat with the Holy See. The precedent of Fascism had been throughout all this period of preparation, right up to the conquest of power, a kind of moral support for Nazism—an inspiring factor, as it were, and to use a judicial term, “a species of alibi”, because in its similarity to Fascism Hitler’s movement could always find protection against all the charges that were levelled against him from different parts of the country, that he was aiming at producing chaos in Germany.

Notwithstanding this, the Nazi Press published reckless statements about Mussolini and Italy. Before Goebbels had become Minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich he began to launch venomous attacks on Fascism. What a splendid thermometer of Nazi bad temper this man who is truly unique in his demagogic tirades, has always been! One day in September, 1931, the *Angriff* published a rather ferocious attack on my chief, Arnaldo Mussolini, who was accused of a tendency to take advantage of his position to enrich himself, and who, it was predicted, was the man earmarked for the post when there would be a new “changing of the guard” in Italy. Now I, who worked under Arnaldo Mussolini, can alone express my deep regret that by his premature death at Christmas that same year, Fascism lost one of its very few upright and level-headed adherents, a man who had he been alive to-day would have been the first to become anti-fascist, brother of the Duce though he was.

Benito Mussolini may well recall that when his brother was alive, he received numerous letters from him written in an unobtrusive, but nevertheless reproachful vein, full of criticisms and admonitions and advice against letting the party degenerate into what it later became—a gang of satraps, profiteers, roisterers, and traitors to the collective interests and to the nation. Arnaldo Mussolini was the Duce’s mentor for many years, and as long as his warnings and his predictions reached the leader of the Fascist State, things went tolerably well; but on his death, a state of anarchy developed. Arnaldo neither

sought power nor a career, and he never aimed at attaining wealth.

That was the reason why, after a brief conversation by telephone with him in Milan, I called at the office of the *Angriff* with a spirited letter of repudiation, which had been dictated to me by my chief, and which he wished to be published immediately. Goebbels was the soul of the Nazi paper. Promises were given to me, which I communicated to Arnaldo, but the letter never appeared. This was typical Nazi journalistic ethics. I swore to myself that never again would I set foot in the office of the *Angriff*, and I have kept my oath. It is rather strange to note the cold-bloodedness with which, in those days, in spite of ties of affinity, in spite of ideological associations and all the other silly claptrap that has been uttered on this score, an official organ of Nazism did not hesitate to insult in the most disgraceful fashion one of the leading personalities of Fascism—to say nothing of his being a brother of the Duce.

The only Nazi who at that time seemed more tractable than the others—and more understanding also—was Hermann Goering. I had met him in the house of Major Renzetti, who is now Italian Minister in Stockholm and was then president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Berlin. The two men knew one another very well, and Goering seemed to think very highly of Renzetti.

If I were to define the status, and the occupation of Goering in the years before the conquest of power by the Nazi party, I would place him in the extreme Right of the Party. He seemed a moderate and reasonable man, ready to negotiate with all parties connected with the Conservative camp—with Hugenberg's German Nationalists as well as with Seldle's Steel Helmets and with the generals of the Landwehr. Gross and corpulent, he nevertheless gave an impression of boundless energy. His large and fleshy hands looked as though they itched to crush to atoms every article within his reach which in the heat of argument he involuntarily clutched. Everybody knew him, with his ponderous thickset contours and his imposing presence. At that time he did not wear the loud uniforms that he affects to-day, nor did he carry in his hand

the Field-Marshal's baton studded with jewels. He was just plain Captain Goering, living in a six-roomed house—an unpretentious dwelling with an unpretentious office, over a little cinema in the Badenschestrasse.

I went to visit him there one day, and it was the only occasion on which I saw him lay aside his unruffled serenity as of a ponderous mammal, and let himself go, gesticulating with a simultaneous movement of all his limbs. He dictated to me a philippic against Chancellor Bruening, and the excitement inspired by his theme put him into such a temper that he forgot that working himself into a passion was putting an inordinate strain on a bulky frame used to none but slow movements. He banged his writing-desk and the arms of his chair with his fist, and made passes in the air with his arms. He spoke of poor Bruening to me with a blend of pity and contempt. Although the gist of that interview is of no importance to-day, I shall never forget that meeting.

Goering alone among his gang seemed to cherish a genuine friendship and admiration for Italy. I believe that he repeatedly begged Renzetti to use his influence to get him an invitation to the Palazzo Venezia, and he was actually one of the first Nazis to be seen on the banks of the Tiber, resplendent in his uniform and with an imposing mass of luggage in his wake. Goering, as is known, had always the weakness of loving external and decorative accessories. Everybody knows about his passion for uniforms, but few are aware that in Rome he got an enormous number of suits made for him by a leading tailor who had dressed all the fashionable world and the members of official circles in the Italian capital, and that he was in the habit of paying cash down for every garment. The moment he heard any mention made of some novelty in fashionable garb Goering pricked up his ears, and determined not to deprive himself of the pleasure of purchasing it. He was never in London, so far as I know, but had he visited that city he would have kept all the West-End tailors and the shoe shops busy, and would have taken back with him, paying lavishly all the while, half the contents of an outfitter's establishment. He took a lion cub to his house to rear, because he

learned that Mussolini used to play with one at the Zoological Gardens. I am even under the impression that his lion cub was sent as a present to him by Mussolini.

Goering's admiration for the Duce was based not only on the ability which Mussolini had shown as a statesman and a leader, but also on his human traits and on his physical vigour. It was a kind of solidarity between the fleshy and massive man and one who, at the age of fifty, had managed by persistently taking exercise every day, despite the limited time available for that purpose, to keep his body trim and even athletic. Finally, as he was by nature extremely practical—in this respect he was very unlike the other Nazis—he saw in Mussolini the triumph of a realistic spirit over rhetoric. In addition to this Mussolini had taken an air-pilot's certificate, and Goering had been an airman during the war and belonged to the famous Richthofen squadron. Their points of contact were, in consequence, sufficient to awaken in the Nazi Goering a blend of feeling all more or less favourable to Italy and to Mussolini. But, as I have already pointed out, he was the only one of the Nazis who entertained such sentiments.

One day I left home equipped with the smallest camera I possessed. It had just occurred to me to take snapshots of Goebbels, and Hinkel, and their fellow-Nazis and Nationalists. They had permitted Communist propaganda in its violent attacks to group together in one body Nazism and Fascism without making the smallest distinction between them, and they termed this body "Fascist". Orders came from Moscow to intensify the fight against "Fascism", meaning Hitler and his movement in particular. On the other hand, none of the Nazis showed the faintest trace of sympathy for Italy and Mussolini—least of all Goebbels and his *Angriff*, and all other satellite propagandist organs. Broad smiles greeted our appearance, but many of these smiles were forced and none of them were really sincere. And I know that somebody was pulling strings already on the Italian side to convince Mussolini what a magnificent thing it would be if the two movements should march side by side in aim and in action. Groups that

were enthusiastically working for this purpose were being formed in Rome, Milan and all the other Italian cities.

I had observed that the show-windows of a book-seller's shop in the Motzstrasse in Berlin, which was owned by the well-known organisation of the Bund Des Deutschen Volkstums, which was notoriously a bureaucratic and Nazi affair, for whole weeks on end displayed publications about an alleged Irredentist movement in the Alto Atesine area and about the sufferings of the Germans of the Alto Adige, as well as on Germany's claim to that province. Furthermore, prominence was given to carefully planned ethnical and geographic charts in which emphasis was laid on the wrong done by Italy to the German people by annexing this frontier region. But they pushed anti-Italian propagandist publicity even further. Other maps extended Germany's claims as far as Istria and Friuli.

The Germans are insurpassable in this propagandist sphere. The subject matter of these propagandist publications was above all criticism, on account of its splendid presentation on paper. Anybody who had seen the book-jackets and pamphlets, with heart-breaking pictures of Istriian and Atesine women, and the huge blood-coloured notes of exclamation, and the bright red hand-written titles to attract more attention—titles that started with copper-plate lettering and trailed off into semi-illegibility suggestive of a wave of anguish overwhelming the soul of the writer, and would then take pains to read the publicity stuff, might have easily persuaded himself that Italy had been guilty of the most inhuman oppression.

I knew that these books and pamphlets were printed in an establishment frequently inspected by Goebbels in his capacity of Minister of Propaganda. I do not know whether the book-shop is still in existence. It is probable that during the war, in the frenzy and delirium of the Axis, it vanished suddenly, just as at the moment of the Pact with Russia the Anti-Comintern museums and book-shops that had been organised by Alfred Rosenberg disappeared. Perhaps with the recent revolutionary happenings in Italy the propaganda shop at the

"Bund des Deutschen Volkstums" has opened again. But at that time it struck me that it would not be completely useless and inopportune to send to Rome a nice photograph of such an inspiring group—and so I did. The misdeed was carried out as the sun rose. Its rays were then bright enough to photograph my objective with my tiny camera. Nobody noticed the incident.

Chapter II

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

I DON'T know how many times the question has been asked, "What sort of a man is Mussolini?" This question coming from one who had not known him and had not any dealings with him is a very common one, because you could never be sure of him. Following him through the long years of his political activity, my memory instantly recalls his unstable mind and character, and the restlessness of his soul that was never satisfied. In reality, Mussolini is undefinable because he is changeable and chameleon-like, and seems to be in a continuous process of evolution. Besides, he is a perfect comedian, and anyone who has not come in contact with him either gets a false idea of him, or remains permanently incredulous; in either case he gets no further in his investigation, and has to give up the hope of understanding Mussolini. Yet, can it be possible that there is no means of discovering the fundamental and definite traits of Mussolini's character?

My first meeting with the Duce was more than twenty years ago, in the spring of 1920, when, at the behest of Gabriele d'Annunzio, I went to Milan to the Via Paolo di Cannobio, where the lair of the first fascio was, to ask Mussolini to take steps to get help sent to the little garrison of legionaries who had barricaded themselves in Fiume. My recollection of the incident is rather confused, and, furthermore, it is a very long time since it occurred. I remember finding myself in a court encircled by walls inside which were rows of houses surrounded by balustrades on which clothes had been hung out to dry. It was one of those typical gloomy December days in Milan, when the city veritably seems crushed and overwhelmed by an impenetrable sooty hood. On the ground in the courtyard were piled up in the greatest disorder shells and boxes of ammunition, and around the walls were propped the gilded spears of the legionaries. Mussolini was not alone in his offices, where

there was a continuous coming and going of messengers, and where, their shoulders hunched against the walls, in leisurely style, some people in black shirts seemed to be waiting for something or other. I saw the two dilated orbs of his popping eyes, and a snout jutting out from the background of massive jaws. It was Mussolini. He wore a rather greasy cloak with its collar turned up, and he was bare-headed. His voice was uneven, now deep and booming, now shrill and piercing. The last syllables of his words were inaudible and seemed to stick in his saliva-clogged uvula. I know that I returned to the Carnaro with my mind clogged with rather rhetorical saws, and with the firm conviction that Mussolini was a man with a very great sense of his own importance.

Two years later, Piero Parini, who was the news editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, and later on became director-general of the foreign fasces (he was also the Italian Minister at Cairo for a very short spell until the Egyptian Government made the post untenable for him) brought me into contact with the Duce for the second time, in the office of his own paper. The interview only lasted for a few minutes. Parini telephoned in advance from the city to say that we were coming along. We had only a few hundred yards to go, and a few minutes later we were shown into the board room of the *Popolo d'Italia*. Mussolini and Piero did all the talking. I did not even open my mouth. Mussolini, who presumed that I was a sub-editor, curtly remarked, "This is the headquarters of the revolution, not a palace", and dismissed me with a wave of his hand. Benito Mussolini, the head of the *Popolo d'Italia*, was much the same as Benito Mussolini, the head of the Government. He was aloof, contemptuous of everybody around him and self-absorbed. The paper only existed for his inflammatory leading articles. The rest of its contents did not matter to him. He used to shut himself up for days on end in his study, refusing to answer the telephone and seeing as few people as possible. When he passed through the corridor towards the exit, he would shoot peculiar curt inquisitive glances at all who crossed his path. I often asked myself whether all his gestures and all his actions were merely histrionic poses. Certainly no public

man was ever so aloof, affected and theatrical as he was; at least that was always the impression I had about him, even when he seemed most sincere.

The only one who seemed to know him most intimately was "the Slinger", Sandro Giuliani, the Editor-in-chief, who had been with Mussolini in the Socialist paper *Avanti*, and had followed him like a puppy in his political metamorphoses. But Sandro Giuliani always entered his chief's room trembling with terror, and never told us anything of what transpired.

I lived in this atmosphere for several years, even after Mussolini went to Government headquarters. Now and again he returned to "the lair" to show that he wished to remain faithful to his "beginnings". Then one day Mattcotti was assassinated. The editorial office of the *Popolo d'Italia*, which, after the assumption of leadership of the State by Mussolini had become the mecca of a ceaseless nocturnal pilgrimage of senators, deputies and outstanding men from all camps in quest of a moral certificate of Fascist orthodoxy, was completely boycotted. Nobody called there any more during the small hours of the morning. The pages of the newspaper went as usual, one by one, to the foundry, and all the technical details of the production of the paper were carried out meticulously, but there were no longer any callers lounging about in the editorial rooms among tables strewn with papers and writing materials. They all kept far away from the *Popolo d'Italia*, and threw away their Fascist badges. Fascism was now in the dock.

I must say that for us who were sweating in the production department of the newspaper, journalists personally aloof from professional politics, none of whom had ever been asked to take the Fascist pledge, those were bitter days. But the mud that was flung at the nation and its disgrace reacted on us as well as on the people. Had not Roberto Farinacci, who was chief secretary of the Party, assumed the role of the ruthless coercionist, making dire threats against traitors and wobblers, Fascism would have been utterly liquidated that summer. Later on, Farinacci had to put up a defence for Dumini, the

man who was chiefly implicated in the murder of Matteotti. But the moral crisis in the Fascist camp lasted for quite a long period before time obliterated its effects.

Mussolini declared that he hated morning coats and silk hats, which he regarded as indicative of a commonplace and foolish mentality. Consequently it may be imagined what commotion it caused in social circles to see the Duce appearing one day in this formal apparel. His squat muscular frame looked as if it were about to burst the seams of the morning coat, which had been cut by a Roman tailor who had been the Duce's comrade in the trenches. Mussolini had forgotten his ancient prejudices. Afterwards he went to Milan to deliver a lecture to a select audience in the Cafe Cova, in the Piazza della Scala. In the first row among those who made room for him on his entrance into the hall, was Giulio Barella, a reporter on a Milan paper. It was observed that Mussolini paused for a few moments in front of him, his eyes on the ground. He was struck by the spotless whiteness of the spats Barella was wearing. Every day after that, and at every opportunity, Mussolini went about wearing white cloth spats over black shoes, which made him look like a penguin, and Barella was appointed legal adviser of the daily paper, *Secolo*, and later on, managing director of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

I have quoted this episode to show what a slave to appearance Mussolini was, and how suddenly he changed his tastes, his fancies and his whims. Unlike Hitler who rarely changes his principles, the Duce is fickle, inconstant and eternally restless. Both men are egocentric, but while Hitler remains steadfast and lets the constellations of men and events revolve around him, Mussolini combines, with great adaptability his own impulses and his own changes with the cycle of the outer world.

The "Changing of the Guard" was an institution created by him. It was in keeping with his own mind, in keeping with his nature which was never satisfied and with his custom of regarding his collaborators as creatures of no account. He took care to repeat this precaution with great frequency. Ministers and party secretaries were quite accustomed to find

on their desks, without any preliminary notice, forms of resignation ready waiting for their signature. Sometimes he himself sent these notices of dismissal, for publication to the Agenzia Stefani, and the victims learned their fate from the newspapers. Mussolini never had friends, but merely serfs, none of whom ever told him the truth. How often in the hall of the Palazzo Venezia have I met leading officials of the régime who had come to make their report, and before being ushered into his presence, enquired from the major-domo of the house about the chief's temper that day! On one occasion I met Dino Alfieri, Under-Secretary for the Corporations, who admitted to me that he always felt his blood run cold when he was ushered into Mussolini's presence. Personally, I could never understand the reason for such orgasms of terror. Scores and scores of times I entered the enormous room in which he worked, crossing the entire length of its uncarpeted floor, on which every footstep resounded, right up to the huge table, behind which the terrorist sat. It was obvious that he was scrutinising me as I approached, and afterwards I instinctively felt his searching glance fixed on my back as I walked to the exit along the bare marble floor. But as for any effect this had on me, I can affirm that I never quailed because I never had anything for which to apologise and never anything to conceal. I simply used to go to have a heart to heart talk with him, and always laid before him a truthful statement of facts as I had learned them. Sometimes he flew into a temper, but I always saw in such outbursts a splendid chance of studying him.

Mussolini entrusted me with the task of sending to him from Berlin reports on the developments in Germany. These reports were to be sent to him personally and only through the medium of the *Popolo d'Italia*. No other office was to be used for the purpose of transmitting these reports. In the earlier days we had as ambassador in the German capital Aldrovandia Marescotti, who was interested only in Dante and Goethe, in bridge and in tennis. He was a very diplomatic gentleman of the old school, which is tantamount to saying that he knew nothing at all about diplomacy. He was succeeded by Orsini

Baroni, a corpulent, elderly and sickly man, who except when prevented by official dinners and receptions, retired to bed at eight o'clock every evening. Orsini was a shrewd Florentine, experienced in his ambassadorial duties and punctiliously observant of routine. His wife, a German woman, had, on one side of her family, very close connections with high finance. The tenure of office of both these ambassadors was quite uneventful. The next ambassador was Vittorio Cerruti, with his Hungarian wife, who was said to be of Jewish extraction. Suvich was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs at Rome, Mussolini, as usual, retaining for himself the portfolio of Minister in that office.

I used to get on very well with Cerruti. He knew how we were situated. He was only too well aware that there was no chance really of genuinely cordial relations with Berlin. Hitler had risen to power, and his programme of reforms was stated to be rather radical. The burning of the Reichstag and the trial which followed it had raised to its highest level the pressure of the German political barometer. Finally a systematic persecution of the Jews was started with the utmost ferocity. In the field of foreign politics the atmosphere was becoming more and more electric, owing to the steadily increasing menace in the tone of Hitler's speeches in his references to a future revision of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, and to the unmistakable tendency to make Germany the centre of a new European explosion.

Cerruti was not the man to allow dust to be thrown in his eyes; he, as well as I, saw that grave danger for our continent was hidden behind Hitler. Every evening he shut himself up in his room, working as hard as he could with his little typewriter which he had brought from Rome. He saw a great many people. He held counsel with his colleagues of the diplomatic corps, in conjunction with whom as is usual in such situations, he established a sort of information bureau. They all suspected that Hitler's Germany was actually manufacturing arms in secret. The general impression among them was that sooner or later Hitler would denounce the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Elisabetta Cerruti was of

great help to her husband in picking up information in the social circles of the German capital.

A little later Massimo Magistrati arrived as Chief Secretary, and finally as counsellor. He said that he was destined to get very rapid promotion as he had married the sister of Galeazzo Ciano, a young woman suffering from consumption which she had brought on herself by undergoing an absurd and unnecessary slimming treatment. I am not sure whether it was Dieckhoff or Weizacker, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who, during a discussion on the Austrian question, interrupted Cerruti, who was supporting with powerful arguments Italy's case for a political balance in the Danubian sphere, by exclaiming in a reproachful tone, "But your Excellency seems always to take too much to heart the interests of your own country". The ambassador shook his head as he related this incident to me. It showed the atmosphere in which one had to work, confronted with amazement on the part of a German that a diplomat should defend the interests of his own country. Poor Cerruti, he alone was in a position to know about the struggle that was going on in Government circles in Germany. Frequently the Marchese Francesco Antinori, who belonged to the paper, and I, who used to meet people well informed about the temper of the Wilhelmstrasse, warned him to be on his guard. We felt anxious for his wife's sake as well as his own, for it was said that he spoke against Germany and Nazism, and was frequently in the company of people representing Germany's literary and artistic world, which at that period included in its ranks a great many Jews. Certainly it was not with any enthusiasm that Cerruti undertook the role allotted to him of arranging for the first meeting between the two chiefs, Mussolini and Hitler.

In Nazi political circles at that time it was held that personal contact between heads of the State was the best medium for dispelling the atmosphere of diffidence and prejudice that prevailed. And so it was that the Germans went to Venice. So far as Mussolini was concerned it was just a case of mere curiosity to make the acquaintance of the man about whom all Europe was talking. He had already formed his own

opinion about Hitler, and I think that the interview made that opinion worse. In the course of a chat with me at the Palazzo Venezia Mussolini had said to me, "Hitler is simply a muddle-headed fellow. His head is just stuffed with philosophical and political tags that are utterly incoherent. I can't make out why he waited so long to take over power, and why he played the fool, with his ridiculous electoral contests, in order to take legal possession of the reins of power. Either he is a revolutionary or he is not. Fascist Italy would never have come into being without a march on Rome. We are dynamic, and Signor Hitler is just a prater." Such was Mussolini's attitude at the end of 1933, an attitude which showed clearly that he did not like Hitler.

The meeting at Venice was a little family comedy. The entire Italian Press turned up, directors and all, simply through curiosity to see that strange freak, Hitler. The Fuehrer arrived accompanied by Von Neurath, Goebbels, Dietrich and minor Party officials. There had been a very informal protocol for the agreements made between the two parties. The peak was to be the conversation between the two chiefs which took place on the Lido golf-links in the bright morning sunshine, while they strolled to and fro over the grass. I noticed that Hitler was speaking all the time in a very excited way, while Mussolini listened, silent and with a semi-scowl on his face. The German prescription for the holding of personal meeting, had a negative result on that occasion. I am even of the opinion that it made the position worse, so far as could be judged from its apparent reaction on Mussolini. He never had been in the position before of having to deal with a babbler of the stamp of Hitler, who was accustomed to long and tedious tirades.

During the course of the two hours the Duce only very rarely opened his mouth to reply to Hitler's spate of verbiage. He was so bored by Hitler's drivel that that very evening, in the middle of the official reception, he decamped in a hurry, and left the lagoon, stating that he did not want to see anybody. Hitler, meanwhile, was left to the voracity of the journalists who had stormed the Hotel Danieli to hear his oracular

pronouncements. I still recall how Gayda fussed and fumed in order to be introduced to the Fuehrer. Manlio Morgagni, president of the Stefani Agency, demanded that I should speak to Cerruti and impress on him that the official agency of Italy had the right to be invited to the banquet to be given on the following day in honour of their guest. Dietrich improvised a mixed meeting of Italian and German journalists at which the usual conventional phrases were uttered. Gayda seized the opportunity, in his broken German, to air his irrepressible yearning to strut and show off on such an important occasion. Later on there was a procession on the Piazzo San Marco, where the brilliant idea struck the Federal Secretary of Venice to parade the same Fascist formations three consecutive times. These formations wheeling round in the maze of the narrow streets reformed their procession after rearranging its component members in a different order. While this comical parade was in progress Dietrich came in for a spate of abuse from a commissary of public security who did not recognise in him one of the most eminent of the nation's guests, no less a personage than the head of the Nazi Press of the Reich.

Both Mussolini and Hitler thought that they were destined to dominate Europe, but each of them had his own secret plan for attaining that result. Gayda alone hit upon the idea of a definite dual dominion of the two chiefs in collaboration with each other. I am sure that if the two men had never come to an agreement the world would never have been thrown into this maelstrom of a new terrible war, for Hitler would never have been courageous enough to start his career of rapine alone. On the other hand, I insist on affirming that Hitler and Mussolini, although they formed with one another that abominable pact known as the Axis, were not made by nature to understand one another. Their technique is so different, and their mentality is so utterly antagonistic. Mussolini belongs to the Latin and Mediterranean race, which is characterised by a greater sense of balance. If Mussolini makes a mistake it is the result of impulse, as was often seen during his last years of power, from his Abyssinian campaign to his intervention in Spain, and from the date of the Axis pact to the

belated declaration of war." Hitler, on the other hand, is a Teuton, with an innate flair for adventure, for struggle and for suffering. Hitler is a Parsifal, and over his life as over his acts hangs a veil of fatalism. Into Hitler's frenzy, which shatters the peace of the nations to satisfy his own imperious will, the law of destiny enters, the urge of the aggressive and all-powerful race which considers itself especially selected by God. In Mussolini the dominant impulse is whim, in Hitler it is dogma. They did not come to an agreement at Venice, and they never would have come to an agreement had not circumstances intervened to make possible a life-and-death pact such as only congenial minds can bring to a successful issue.

Cerruti had foreseen clearly that it would turn out a fiasco. In fact, shortly afterwards the storm broke. For political reasons Mussolini had undertaken to defend Austria. He had established an intimate personal friendship with Dollfus, who often went to Rome in quest of support against the persistent overbearing gestures of Nazi Germany. Prince Stahrenberg had reinforced his Heimwehr with Fascist supporters. By this attitude Mussolini kept a check on Hitler's political activities on the frontiers of the little Danubian nation. If Nazism aimed at hegemony in that sector, it had to bear in mind that Italy had forestalled it. The Duce blew the trumpets of the Fascist Press, which was noted for its fiery temper, and we had a fierce campaign the mere memory of which to-day should make the framers of the Axis grow pale. The Roman newspapers stated that the Nazis were bloodthirsty barbarians, that they were homosexual and that there was something definitely lacking in them. After the Roehm episode the Fascist Press branded the German people as a race of degenerates.

My paper required me to collect as much material as possible in order to put Germany and Nazism in the dock, as if I had not enough to worry me already. A series of articles written from the Saar during the plebiscite had stirred up a feeling of sullen enmity towards me on the part of some Nazi newspaper directors, chief among them being Braun von Stumm, not to mention fierce attacks by the *Boersen Zeitung*, the inspired organ of the Wilhelmstrasse. Megerle and Braun

von Stumm had sworn to get their own back on me; the latter I was told, always carried with him in his attache case the cutting from the *Popolo d'Italia* with my article to which such exception had been taken, in order to have always with him proof that I was a journalist with an anti-German bias. My friends later informed me that in the precincts of the famous Ribbentrop office my name had appeared on the black list. I never could find out precisely what was the purpose of this office, whether it was to prepare for the candidature of Ribbentrop as Minister of Foreign Affairs to supersede Von Neurath, who was deemed to be too moderate, or whether it was intended to be a school, if one might use the term, of policy in the domain of foreign politics, as the Gestapo was in the domain of internal policy. It is certain that fine specimens of journalists, intriguing diplomats and rogues of all kinds came from that office. The relations between Ribbentrop and Himmler are so intimate that it is not surprising that they should have such an identity of methods.

Mussolini showed no inclination to end the anti-German and anti-Nazi campaign which he had started. At bottom, if we eliminate useless and dangerous excesses, this campaign had been started in order to appeal to all sound thinkers. The finger was placed on an old sore, and a great many anomalies were revealed. Among other publications there appeared an interesting work by Giovanni Ansaldo in which the anti-Jewish policy of Nazism was pilloried in a very able and clear manner. In those days Fascism proclaimed itself the paladin of the weak and the downtrodden, as well as of the peace of Europe. I was summoned to Rome, where the Duce heard my verbal report substantiating the gist of my writings which I regularly sent to him. Having realised that in various Berlin circles there was a demand for action by Germany against Austria, Mussolini, giving way to an outburst of rage, exclaimed, "Let him come! Hitler has no idea what great things Fascist Italy is capable of doing. I can teach him how war is waged. I do not fear Germany with all her open and secret preparations." I recall how he suddenly jumped up from his seat behind the large table, and measured the length of the room in long

strides until, having come right up to the wall, he wheeled round abruptly, his face scarlet with fury, and fixed his eyes on me. "Tell these gentlemen," he went on, "that they cannot trifle with Italy of the Littoria!" Suvich, to whom I went immediately afterwards, was glad to see me. I knew that he was delighted to add fuel to the flames. We chatted about an important job that had to be done, and then he said good-bye, after exhorting me to work in the closest co-operation with Cerruti.

I had hardly reached Berlin when the dreadful atrocity in Vienna was perpetrated. Dollfuss was assassinated, and his wife and infant children had, with the greatest difficulty succeeded in flying for refuge to Italy, where the Mussolini family lavished hospitality and assistance on the widow and orphans. The Duce then made a grand gesture. He announced that he had sent five divisions to the Brenner to safeguard Italian interests should Hitler persist in his design of annexing Austria. This threat about the five divisions was just a little farce. What actually happened was that the local garrisons in the frontier provinces received orders to be constantly mobilised. Furthermore, five divisions would not have been enough to restrain Hitler, whose forces in Germany, even if on accepted German admissions, had assumed proportions far in excess of what the Duce calculated. But it was evident that the mere threat cowed Hitler. The Austrian National Socialists were requested to moderate their frenzy, and the word "Anschluss" was erased from the German political terminology.

But the Nazi Press did not forgive Mussolini for his intervention, and thenceforward adopted a very severe and critical attitude towards him. Meanwhile events were following each other with startling rapidity. Under the terrified eyes of the democratic powers Hitler had one by one rendered null a number of clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and had assumed complete liberty on the question of armaments. One morning the *Verein der Auslaendischen Presse*, the Union of the Foreign Press in Berlin, of which my friend, Louis P. Lochner was the president, entertained Goering and his wife as guests for

breakfast at the Adlon Hotel, and I sat beside Emma Goering. It was on that occasion that Air-Marshal Goering told us in a sarcastic tone that all our suspicions about a secret revival of the German Air Arm had been perfectly well founded, notwithstanding categorical official denials. With a triumphal air, which seemed to disclose, "I have done it to you," he added that the aerial armaments had been all completed in secret, and that the planes had been built in sections in different places; all that remained to be done was to assemble them. Nevertheless, the Government was right in asserting that the planes to which the foreign Press referred did not exist. They did not exist in the sense that they had not yet passed out of the marshalling yards. Goering always liked these dramatic interludes, and this was a day of genuine triumph for him. My colleagues rushed to the telephone booths to communicate the sensational news to their papers. I kept my seat beside Frau Goering and was just asking her to give me some details about her husband's projected trip to Greece, when he himself butted in with some heat. "Yes, but this time the plane in which I am travelling will not break its journey in Italy. It had been my plan at first to pass through Rome, but I have abandoned the idea. After what happened between us it will be a long time before you see me in your country."

In the summer of 1935 a change took place in the Italian Embassy at Berlin. Vittorio Cerruti, whom the Germans had accused of representing Italy's interests with too much truth and fidelity, was recalled and placed on the retired list. He was succeeded by Bernardo Attolico, whose last diplomatic mission had been at Rio de Janeiro, immediately after a period in Moscow. This change, following the retirement of Baron Aloisi, who had represented the Fascist Government in a disguised manner at Geneva, was the first change made through the desire of Galeazzo Ciano. The appointment of Ciano to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which followed soon after—for the Duce made up his mind never to entrust this post to anybody and had kept it for himself for many years—gave me the impression of an act of nepotism. After the marriage of Galeazzo and Edda, the Duce's daughter, the

position of the Cianos, a Leghorn family, had become a powerful one. Until then the Duce had been particularly careful not to show any favouritism to any of his relatives, and with the exception of his brother Arnaldo, who was manager of the *Popolo d'Italia* and held some honorary provincial office, all the Duce's numerous cousins and relatives had remained petty officials of the lowest rank. But the Cianos were not people to let the opportunity slip of attaining to wealth and influence. Galeazzo's career abroad had been limited to the post of consul-general of first rank at Shanghai. Later he became head of the official Government Press, and finally he established the Ministry of Popular Culture. In 1933 he and his wife spent some weeks in London, where Dino Grandi was Ambassador; apparently they returned from the British capital rather dissatisfied, maintaining that they had not been received by English Society with the regard due to the daughter and the son-in-law of Mussolini. I noticed that there was a change in the atmosphere, because my reports were no longer in demand, and when I returned to Rome, I found some difficulty in being received by the Duce. I was given to understand that the same thing would have happened had I spoken to Ciano, a thing which I took very good care not to do as the report had reached my ears during these few days in Rome that Ciano was in favour of establishing better relations with Berlin.

Before coming to the German capital Attolico must most decidedly have been informed about my opinions with regard to Germany, and about the reports which I generally sent, for he suddenly began to keep me under observation. People had told him that I had at my disposal a certain number of valuable sources of information, and this made him jealous. But he never made the slightest move to invite my co-operation; on the contrary, he assumed a hostile attitude. Not trusting anybody in the Embassy, with the exception of Magistrati, who was himself Ciano's brother-in-law, he had appointed as his own special reporter an official of the German Ministry. Braun von Stumm, my implacable enemy, told him on what good terms he was with the Wilhelmstrasse. I

could never understand this ingenuousness on the part of Attolico, who was really an old fox at the game. But his great handicap was that he knew nobody and did not know the language.

He instituted Mondays as "Press Days", when he got all us correspondents to go to the Embassy for a conversazione, which invariably began with the question, meant specially for me, as to whether we had any news to tell him. Now as a journalist I love my work and am ready to share with anybody on the basis of sincere mutual reciprocity; but when an ambassador tries to pick information out of me, which he afterwards uses in his own reports to the Government, and does not reward me even by trusting me or giving me any assistance for my service, I for one refuse to co-operate with him. Consequently I adopted the tactics of silence and indifference in dealing with Attolico. He used to glance at me obliquely through his glasses—he was rather near-sighted—and that glance told me everything. When the president of my agency, the Stefani, passed through Berlin on his way to Riga, where a congress was being held, Attolico took him to his house to extract a promise that he would order me to send him on my reports before telephoning them. Forcseeing this, however, I put Morgagni on his guard, and urged him not to be weak, and to remember that an agency ought to be able to turn out independent and very speedy work. I did not even go to Rome any more, because they told me that every time I went away it made the ambassador nervous. By this time everybody knew about this moody antipathy between us, which was constantly being aggravated by Braun von Stumm.

Attolico was not the only diplomat who deliberately sent false reports to the Italian Government, but he did this job in a special way, ordering the publicity department of the embassy to cut out special extracts from the German papers which suited his purpose best, and sending these cuttings to Rome to produce the effect he wanted. The Abyssinian campaign started in October, 1935. We all read the articles in the *Voelkscher Beobachter* and the other Nazi organs urging the Negus to resist the Italian attack, while at the same time

Mussolini in a speech had specially emphasised the fact that Germany had refused to join in the sanctions against him. The inconsistency was obvious. Rome should have been informed about the position, but instead of that, the Ambassador studied every means of getting his Government to rely upon him to bring about unqualified sympathy on the part of Germany towards the Ethiopian enterprise.

Before the Italian campaign Germany had adopted a policy of economic penetration in Abyssinia which Mussolini's adventure unexpectedly upset. The German minister at Addis Abbaba was on a very friendly footing with the Negus whom he saw frequently, much more frequently than he saw the minister for Great Britain. German delegations were on the eve of departure for Abyssinia to examine the question of advantageous developments. Apart from all that, Berlin could not forget the attitude adopted by Mussolini in the Austrian question, and the intensive campaign carried on in the Italian Press against Nazism, all of which showed what a deep gulf yawned between the mentalities of the two peoples. But Attolico had over-estimated the significance of the German gesture in refusing to take part in the sanctions imposed by Geneva on Italy for her attack on Ethiopia. Germany refused to have anything to do with the sanctionist combine not from any solidarity with Italy, but merely because it suited her own ends. If England were eliminated as a competitor, Germany would remain the only nation to supply coal for Italian industries. In place of the Welsh coal, the importation of which had been immediately stopped when the deliberations on the question of sanctions started, Mussolini thought he was making a good deal in buying inferior and more expensive German coal.

In this connection, a rather interesting interlude is worth describing. A friend of mine who was at the head of a huge concern dealing with the distribution of fuel in Northern Italy—he had formerly been a customer of the organisations that produced coal for Rome—sent me a letter to Berlin, in January, 1936, requesting my intervention with the German authorities on the exportation of this mineral. There existed

at the time an Italo-German pact for the supply of such exports; but the amount stipulated for a whole year had been used up in just two months by Italian industry, working at feverish tempo to turn out armaments for the Abyssinian war. My friend asked me to ginger up the agreement, in view of the urgency and seriousness of the position, urging that more coal should be sent to Genoa, the centre of export for the war zone. He included in the letter photographed copies of the desperate appeals that reached him, as the distributor, from a number of big Lombard, Ligurian and Piedmontese industrial establishments—death-bed appeals, so to speak—stating that they found it impossible to continue their task of producing armaments for the army in Abyssinia. A patriotic duty was in question; consequently I did not hesitate to do what I was asked, although deep in my soul, from the very start, I had misgivings about the benefits likely to accrue from this colonial war, which, even under the most favourable circumstances, would, in return for a rather trivial gain, place Italy's international position and her friendship with the Great Powers in jeopardy. I went first to the offices of the headquarters of the Rheinische-Westfaelische Syndikat, and thence to the Ministry of Economics in order to negotiate with an official whose name I have forgotten, who appeared to be connected with the practical side of the exportation of mineral products. I got a most prompt and even enthusiastic assent to my request immediately. The magnates of the Rhineland and Westphalia had quantities of coal already mined and dumped on the lines between Essen and Dusseldorf and Gelsenkirchen, which I myself had observed as I sped along by motor through those regions, to say nothing of the Saar region which was even richer in coal seams, and had been restored to its German owners a few years previously. As for the mining official, he promised to give me a definite reply as soon as he had consulted with the other officials in the Ministry. Barely two hours later he rang me up at my house to tell me that my request had been granted. New supplies of coal, in addition to what had already been contracted for, would be dispatched to Italy, for she was engaged in an adventure on which her

prestige as a great nation depended. Yet nothing further happened, because the Italian embassy intervened and the trade agent thought himself slighted by my private initiative. Just the usual throwing of the spanner into the machinery, a petty question of authority and competition, and everything went wrong. But what had happened showed that Germany was interested in making a cash deal, now that she no longer had any competition to fear.

Nor was that all. Germany was also selling arms to the Negus of Abyssinia. An Arab was introduced to me, whom I knew just as "Ali", and who, I am inclined to believe, controlled a network of espionage propaganda among the Arabs in the Near East. He claimed to be a close friend of the Crown Prince of Yemen, and actually showed me the letters which the latter had sent him, as well as others in his own father's handwriting, stamped with huge seals. He gave me a synopsis of his family history, alleging that the Yemen, through the medium of the royal family which was on very friendly terms with Mussolini, was in the best political relations with Rome. The old sovereign—if I could believe the translation which "Ali" gave me of this Arabic missive, a language with which I was unfamiliar—was eternally deploring the difficulties which British agents scattered throughout Arabia were causing him. They were heart-to-heart friendly confidences, the outpourings of an embittered soul, but I suspected that behind these senile vapourings was hidden the trickery of a mercenary old Arab chief in financial straits, who had not succeeded in getting paid for his services either by England or by Italy. "Ali" was in correspondence with the German armament magnates and to a certain extent with all the traffickers in armaments in Europe, and gambled in this line of business.

On one occasion "Ali" called and informed me that he could dispose of a considerable assignment of rifles that were stored in Belgium, over which he had an option. He was anxious to offer them to the Italian Government, otherwise they would go to the Negus, who had asked for them. When I informed Rome of the possibility of making a deal what was

the reply I received? I was told that there was no use in buying the rifles. Let them be sent to Haile Selassie by all means, and in the meantime Italy would take steps to sink the cargo en route.

I had a lot of trouble and annoyance over this affair. Apparently taking me as the accredited representative of the Italian Government—nobody seemed to trust Attolico—all these German travellers, speculators, business men and technicians who had something to say about Ethiopia kept dropping in at my house. I would never have fancied that there were in Germany so many people who were acquainted with this distant African region—which Mussolini was about to invade and conquer. My desk was piled up with proposals, requests, development plans and maps. One man came to tell me that he knew the Abyssinian territory because he had lived there for more than forty years, and that nobody would be as capable as he was of pointing out to the Italians the exact localities that were suitable for systematic economic exploitation. Abyssinia suddenly became the paradise of gold, the opulent land where wealth was made. Finally a film magnate had grandiose schemes. He wished to make big adventure films with an African background. He meant to create a genuine Abyssinian film industry and to open picture-palaces in that remote region. He brought a movie camera to my house, and showed me a guide to Addis Abbaba which was rather interesting, as it showed, among other things, the home life of the Negus and his family.

What was the aim of these visitors? Who sent them to me? This I could never find out. I only know that seeing that these various experiments proved abortive, the German Government took the plunge and, pointing out to Mussolini the intimate knowledge which a certain number of German experts had of Abyssinia, succeeded in obtaining from him an agreement for the formation of a commission, half-Italian, half-German, to be sent there to study the best means of developing this African California.

Another curious individual made desperate efforts to get in contact with me; when finally he succeeded, it was long before

I could get rid of him. He said that he was an ex-colonel of the Reichswehr, declaring that he had fought under Essad Pasha, who had entrusted him with the task of re-organising the Turkish military academies. He claimed a right to compensation from the Italian Government because, according to himself, he had worked at Addis Abbaba in the service of the Italian espionage department, until having been betrayed by his own chauffeur, and miraculously escaped from an attempt made on his life by the order of Haile Selassie, he had to fly to Djibuti, leaving all his belongings behind. He asked me to visit him in his flat at Dahlem and to meet his young wife with their baby who, he said was born in Addis Abbaba. All the time I had the absolute conviction that this bore had been sent by the Gestapo to observe my movements. Sometimes he betrayed himself by recalling to my mind by vague casual allusions certain well-known individuals in the Reich, all of whom I knew to belong to this circle. Another time he claimed to be working on a book dealing with the precedents of the Abyssinian affair and for this apparent purpose would ask me innumerable questions with the very remotest bearing on the theme of his alleged work. Furthermore, he was completely lacking in any literary or even journalistic skill. My suspicions were not unfounded. Once I got acquainted with this individual I learned that they were talking about me more insistently in the offices of the Albrechtstrasse. But I shall return to that later on.

Mussolini's enterprise in Abyssinia was an instance of sheer bluff. Italy was at that time by no means as prepared as she should have been for a colonial war. Her arms were inadequate and out-of-date. Her transport vessels were too few to land in Africa an army fit for a long and perhaps exhausting colonial war. But even assuming that this army could have been safely landed, it would be faced with the insoluble problem of independence of action, seeing that it would have been impossible to ensure a steady flow of reinforcements in view of the necessity of their uninterrupted passage through the Suez Canal, which was controlled by the English.

The Mediterranean was not safe, and the Italian fleet was

in no position to face the challenge of the British naval forces. When I asked our naval attaché in Berlin, just at the outset of the campaign, what our chances in the Mediterranean were, he replied, "My dear friend, let us not talk about it. If, for instance, we chanced to learn that the British fleet was on the way from Gibraltar to Alexandria or Haifa, we would have no alternative but to watch it pass with resignation. We could do nothing to stop it."

What a nice prospect, I thought, for this purely naval war, should Great Britain decide to intervene in aid of the Negus! Before we can become a military force on Ethiopian soil, ours is a task of defending ourselves on the sea, and if that defence fails, it is all up with our enterprise. Even then I thought that Mussolini would hardly be capable of exposing his country to such a risk without the adequate co-efficient of safety, for in the event of failure all the work of reconstruction of over ten years would be placed in jeopardy, and we should end in irreparable disaster. It seemed to me that, after all, the end did not justify the risk, as Italy would have gained nothing but a lot of anxieties in a land infested by guerilla bands under fanatical chiefs who would fight in ambush, on ground favourable to them. But Italy was not only lacking in national preparation; she lacked moral and political preparation as well. The belated intervention of the Fascist Press in support of the case for war in Abyssinia showed that Mussolini had decided upon war *ex abrupto* and at the last moment. On what grounds did he justify the aggression?

He maintained that Haile Selassie's freebooters had repeatedly made raids over their frontier into Italian Somaliland, in the course of which they perpetrated atrocities. Assuming that that was true, why did Mussolini make up his mind only just at the last moment to call upon the world in protest against such outrages? The propagandist and documentary literature dealing with the provocative acts of the Negus, with pamphlets and leaflets and photographs of the victims of Ethiopian cruelty, was dispatched from Rome to the Italian embassies and legations abroad, neatly packed in boxes, only when the war was over.

Had Goebbels been handling such propaganda, he would have started a year in advance to fill the world with eloquent heart-wringing indictments in his endeavour to convince it that Haile Selassie was the most savage of despots. But Mussolini has always been, on the stage of politics and war strategy, a performer who played and sang by ear without observing that the world's audience was not impressed by his inartistic performance. He thought that he was making an impression, but the listeners greeted his blundering efforts with shrugs of their shoulders. Such was the case too, later on, in Greece and in Libya. But Mussolini had not even enough trained recruits nor generals impressed with the necessity for the Abyssinian campaign! No, it was not an army that disembarked in the narrow and sultry port of Massawa, where it encountered 120 degrees of heat and all the tedium of normal routine, but a brigade of adventurers on a will-o'-the-wisp expedition, who hardly knew the purpose of their going, who arrived in an unfamiliar country exhausted, badly armed and depressed. Mussolini had said that the campaign would be finished in a few months, going against the opinion of the general staff who were quite candid about the risks of the enterprise under such conditions, with soldiers lacking the necessary experience, and unfitted for the African climate.

Wishing to give a cachet to the enterprise, Mussolini decided that all the leading Fascists in turn should do volunteer service with the fighting forces. Even this was rather a comic arrangement, for, with a few exceptions, the high priests of the Party and of the Government barely put in so much as a fleeting appearance in the drafts to Africa—just long enough to be able to say that they had been there. Yet they brought home medals for valour which for the most part were undeserved. In this way Galeazzo Ciano could pin on his breast a silver medal because he had once flown over a stretch of enemy territory with the squadron under his command; and Roberto Farinacci, a member of the Grand Council, was invalided home with his left hand mutilated—a mutilation that was not brought about in action, but was the result of a piece of pure

imbecility on his part, owing to a grenade bursting in his hand while he was playing with it when off duty.

But Mussolini's bluff carried him through. England made no move, nor did France. Nobody raised a finger to stop the enterprise. The Duce was able to finish with triumph a campaign which he had undertaken despite the scepticism of his generals, despite the sullen indifference of the nation, and despite the passive hostility of the Powers. He proclaimed the Empire, and finally gave orders that the list of the States that had supported the Sanctions should be inscribed on the façades of all the municipal buildings in Italy, to serve alike as a memorial and a token of triumph. There were fifty states, all told, almost the whole world. Of course Germany alone stood aloof from the enactment of sanctions and preened herself for having done so.

At Berlin things had been going from bad to worse so far as I was concerned. My feud with Attolico, which originated in a conflict of political opinion and methods of work, became ever more embittered and sullen. Once I had to rush off to Rome to insist on speaking to Mussolini, as I had been told that on one of his visits to the city a few days previously, the ambassador had successfully appealed for disciplinary action against me.

When I returned to my post, I swore I would have my revenge. The German Government was on the point of starting naval negotiations with the British Government which later led to the agreement which stabilised the proportions of the two fleets and of the submarines. At the Wilhelmstrasse they were working day and night to compile a note which was to be handed by Ribbentrop to the English Government. One of my scouts gave me the opportunity of making a splendid scoop. He rushed into my house in the Meranerstrasse, at 6 a.m., with fragments of paper on which were transcribed in French some extracts from the German note. We started patiently to make a piece of mosaic work until at length the document had been completely reconstructed. Then I got through on the telephone to the Agenzia Stefani in Rome and dictated the note in full. Then I gave a summary of it, as if it

were my only communication with them, derived from information I had received. I requested them to publish the summary immediately, and to wait until I gave the signal for the release of the official document. I did not want to have trouble with the Wilhelmstrasse. My wife was at that juncture on the eve of giving birth to a baby and I wanted to keep as quiet as possible. The Deutsches Nachrichten Bureau released the short summary together with a statement that the note had been sent to Mr. Eden by the German Ambassador. I called up Rome, and said that the document could now be published in full. This was done immediately, and in that way the Italian newspapers were ahead of all other countries with the news next morning. It was the only time I succeeded in beating my worthy colleagues and friends of the Associated Press, Reuter and Havas, who were usually better informed than I was. But the satisfaction I felt at having made a good journalistic coup was blended with the presentiment that a hurricane would soon burst over my head for my temerity. Next day about noon, the very same day on which, in the early dawn, the Italian Press had been able to inform its readers about the German note, Attolico summoned all the Italian correspondents to a press conference. He had just returned that moment from an interview with the German Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and was holding in his hand some sheets of paper as well as the German note, from which he read extracts, warning us, however, not to send anything for publication pending instructions from the Wilhelmstrasse.

What was I to do? Ought I to have warned Attolico that, owing to my action, the document was already published in Italy? I recalled that he had tried to ruin me by turning my employers against me. While I was brooding over the matter the telephone started ringing. It was Palazzo Chigi whom the ambassador had rung up to give them the news. I left Attolico to face his disillusionment and surprise when he had learned about my coup.

All that day the Embassy was looking for me, but I was not to be found. Later on in the evening, however, I could not

decline the definite invitation to call on the ambassador. It was the most comical conversation I ever had. Apparently Palazzo Chigi had remonstrated in very strong terms with the fatuous Attolico in that he had got the news after it had been given to the press; but protests must likewise have come from the Wilhelmstrasse. He began the conversation with a long-winded preamble in which he tried to appear calm, although I saw rancour glinting in his eyes behind the thick convex glasses. He told me that I was not to be afraid to give him the name of the official in the Embassy who, according to him, had given me the information. I saw that he had only a very vague idea as to what had happened. I replied that the man who gave me the news did not live in the Embassy. Then he tried to make me tell him from what other source the information had reached me. I told him nothing, of course. I could not betray a poor devil of an employee, who would have been immediately thrown into the street along with his family. Attolico tried to prise out of me a statement as to which of the German ministries, the Foreign Office or the Propaganda Office, had given me the news in advance. I did my best to make him understand in a few words which allowed of no reply that he was wasting his time, as he would get nothing out of me. He bade me farewell very frigidly.

Others before me have told how difficult it is for correspondents of foreign papers in Berlin to attend to their work without risk of annoyance. As soon as the Nazis came to power attempts on the part of the Government to exercise pressure on foreign correspondents began to be very evident. Otto Dietrich had barely taken over his job as head of the Press Bureau when he began sniping at the Foreign Press Union. The president of this organisation was Edgar Mowrer, of the *Chicago Daily News*, a journalist of the finest democratic type, a courageous writer, and an excellent friend to all of us. His charming wife, Mrs. Mowrer, spoke Italian perfectly, and was always eager to have a chat with me about the happy years she spent in Rome when Edgar represented some newspaper or other belonging to his political party. Both of them, not

in order to pay compliments to me but in tones of deep sincerity, used to maintain that merely to live in Italy, notwithstanding the back-hand blow given by Fascism to democratic ideals, was far easier and far more agreeable than having to endure the oppressive atmosphere generated by Hitler's Germany.

The personnel of the Ministry knew what the attitude of my American colleague was. Their resentment against him was evinced when the Union was informed, unofficially, of course, that it would either be suppressed or banned and excluded from all official relations whatsoever, if Mowrer did not resign the post which he held as president. A general meeting of the Union was hurriedly convened, and I recollect that all who turned up spoke in terms that showed they were solidly behind Edgar and would back him through thick and thin. The possibility of a voluntary winding-up of the organisation as a protest was canvassed, but it was opposed by the Dutch and Scandinavian members. Mowrer voluntarily resigned the post himself a few days later, when he was recalled to the United States.

Louis P. Lochner of the Associated Press, who succeeded him, was more successful, not because he was more flexible, but because the deep dislike entertained towards his predecessor did not exist in his case. This was because Lochner had been in Germany for a greater number of years, had a German wife, and spoke the language of the country almost better than the Germans themselves. Yet for all that, the attempts to bring pressure to bear on the Union was not given up even under this new leadership. Decrees for the expulsion of "undesirable" correspondents followed at a striking crescendo. No president of the Foreign Press Union was ever so brilliant as Lochner. He had the knack of impressing the functionaries of the Hitler régime and twisting them round his little finger, with his witty glibness in after-dinner speeches and on all ceremonial occasions. They really could not make out whether he was a friend or an enemy, but they decided to allow that he was a broad-minded, reasonable man, and they left it at that.

The general meeting of the Foreign Press Union, in 1937, wished to make me president, thinking perhaps that the fact of having an Italian at the helm would protect them from the unending venom of Nazi circles. It made a mistake in doing so, for dynamite had been placed under my presidential chair. Dietrich evidently expected that I would have handed over to him the Union on a platter; as that did not happen, he invariably received me with an angry frown. He practically held me responsible if attacks on the policy of Germany were published in any foreign paper written by its Berlin correspondent. Very frequently I was obliged to intervene in order to get orders for expulsion revoked. I got no support from my Italian colleagues, who took absolutely no interest in the Union. Some of them were not only out-and-out Fascists, but notorious for their pro-German sentiments. I found myself, in consequence, carrying on a lone fight between the demands of the German Government and the right which the Union claimed to maintain its own democratic character. How I managed to carry on that fight, in addition to all the trouble Attolico gave me I don't know. He was eternally putting spokes in my wheel. At the end of my year's term as president, I was preparing to give up my office, with a feeling of relief at having the chance to regain a little of my normal tranquillity of mind, when the Union re-elected me, not knowing that in doing so, they were practically digging my grave.

Chapter III

CAESARS AMONG THEM

THERE are evolutions which, even in spite of the most subtle arguments and when allowances have been made for the most extenuating circumstances, it is impossible to explain from a human standpoint. One of these is the evolution of Mussolini. He is a son of the Mediterranean, with a Mediterranean outlook very far from being liable to be so much as impressed, to say nothing of fascinated, by the historical entity of Central Europe. From the point of view of any Roman and Latin mentality—a mentality of which Mussolini was a typical product—beyond the Alps there could only exist races of a different culture and mentality. Skilled, as were the first invading hordes of the Middle Ages, in the technique of rapine and warfare, they were races imbued with the pugnacity which comes from an inferiority complex, and for that reason, in the thrall of a tragic destiny. Almost the only Southerner whose views were an exception to this Latin and Roman bias was Dante, who was endowed with a more cosmic inspiration, and saw in the intervention of a Nordic prince the salvation of Italy during the period of fierce regional feuds throughout the peninsula.

But in our days the Middle Ages, with a Holy Roman Empire of Germanic nations, was forgotten; forgotten, too, were the inevitable interventions of foreigners during that era. Italy was herself once more, intent on developing a lasting national order of her own, inspired by the record of Rome's glory and a jealously treasured consciousness of her own ethnical, cultural and traditional prerogatives. If the Italian people, during the era of Liberalism, had broken away from this tradition, in order to follow the great developments of thought and life which emanated directly from the North, Mussolini with his Fascism aimed at reviving the consciousness of Italy's own moral strength while waiting for the opportunity

to give her material strength as well. When Mussolini seized power, he carried in his heart the vision of the Roman Empire. He knew that the fulfilment of his dream would very probably entail war, but it was also possible that he harboured the illusion that he could pattern himself on Ancient Rome, which sometimes by the power of its sheer prestige and an adroit exercise of diplomacy, succeeded in adding new dominions to the vast ones it already possessed. In Mussolini's mind, however, the imperial ideal was in a merely embryonic stage; it was a propagandist ideal. How to proceed in order to realise that ideal he did not know, nor was he anxious to know.

Mussolini was anti-German from birth, and remained anti-German all his life, until 1938. No people in Europe other than the Germans could have accepted a Nazi political organisation. In fact, wherever analogous movements started, they developed into ridiculous plagiarisms of the organisation that Hitler gave to his own country. Mussolini was exasperated by the mere fact that there were affinities between Fascism and Nazism, for he had always been convinced that he himself had created something original and inimitable. He would have preferred that Hitler should speak like Bismarck and act like Moltke. In 1914 Mussolini broke away from the Italian Socialist Party to join the campaign against Germany; he actually fought against the Austrians and Germans, and was wounded in action.

Although he was not satisfied with the result of the war, and maintained that the Allies had not fulfilled the promises made by them in the Treaty of London, Mussolini could not resist the pleasure of apostrophising Stresemann in his own newspaper, as well as later on, in the Chamber of Deputies. He ridiculed "the dull Teutons, who with feathers in their hats and with hob-nailed shoes, posing as tourists, went swaggering around with a self-sufficient air through the beautiful Italian cities."

So it is obvious that Mussolini had neither love nor respect for the German people or the German mentality. Furthermore, his attitude never changed for ten years after he had

taken over the reins of government. The Italians, who, immediately after Mussolini had risen to power, had seen him perform the splendid gesture of sending warships to Corfu to frighten Greece because some gangsters had murdered two Italian officials, realised after some time how inconsistent his policy was. One day they would read in the Fascist Press wild attacks on Germany; another day France would be pilloried. England, on the other hand, was never attacked, unless the violent outburst against Liberalism and Democracy that appeared in Mussolini's papers could be regarded as anti-British. It was not until later that the day was to come when Gayda and his companions, at a hint from Mussolini, would snipe vulgarly at Anthony Eden when he made himself at Geneva the paladin of the sanctions against Italy. These outbursts of the Italian Press had become a matter of routine, and the world no longer wondered at them. The journalists of Fascism—and Mussolini regarded himself as their leader—were known for their blatancy. Even in Germany the trumpet blasts issued by Rome were not taken seriously.

The attitude of antagonism towards Berlin was destined to disappear imperceptibly and slowly. At first the metamorphosis was inexplicable. In Italy, a sudden wave of Germanophilism swept political and journalistic circles; but it did not reach the masses. What did the masses know of things, kept as they were in complete ignorance of what was going on? Mussolini needed the masses merely as a decorative background for the régime; he never consulted them. He created the Chamber of Fascios and Corporations by an arbitrary act, putting his signature, so to speak, at the foot of a roll of national councillors elected, not by the people, but by the Party machine. Periodical elections to express the will of the people were never held in Italy after the day Mussolini went to Rome. The Duce remembered the people only when he wanted to get a thrill from appealing to the grey, drab listening mob; it gave him extraordinary pleasure, for he visualised it as a direct dialogue between himself and the crowd, free from all external influences. Sometimes he directed questions to his mob in order to feel its presence more intimately; when he had

received a reply he resumed his spate of bold terse rhetoric.

Mussolini never thought of his 45,000,000 Italians until it was a question of demanding sacrifices from them—to-day a national loan, to-morrow a military enterprise. As the people gave no indication of any need or even desire to take part in political activity, Mussolini revelled in the satisfactory feeling that he could do whatever he wished with them and with Italy, and embark on any adventure whatsoever that appealed to him. He had conferred benefits on the nation, it was for the nation to give him in return its staunch support.

But although I was aware that Mussolini reacted readily either to sympathy or antipathy, I would never have believed that those emotions swayed him to such an extent as they actually did. The appointment of Galeazzo Ciano to a post in the Cabinet marked the development of a new atmosphere. Ciano was a young man of unbounded ambition. Basing his hopes on his relationship with the Duce, he doubtless believed that he might one day be his successor. During the last dramatic meeting of the Grand Council, which decided upon his downfall, Mussolini told his son-in-law, who associated himself with the criticism directed against him, that he had always suspected that he had taken a traitor to his heart—that he had a traitor in his own family. Ciano had raised himself by the help of the Duce; he now threatened his benefactor. If, however, Mussolini had really seen that his son-in-law was working against him and for his own ambitious ends, why did he allow him to go on? Was it the outcome of paternal weakness for Edda, the daughter whom he idolised? Or was it just a psychological flaw in a politician?

Nobody knows what transpired inside the Mussolini family circle to make him depart from his hide-bound ideas and conventions. Suffice it to say that Ciano came into power, though it ought not to be assumed that he was able to exercise a determining influence. The fact is that a different wind began to blow in Rome, and we who were in a foreign land were soon apprised of it from the orders that emanated from there

We were requested especially to use more courteous language to Nazi Germany, avoiding captious criticism, and rather laying emphasis on the two movements "which Providence has designed to confer on this earth in order to make it happy". Suddenly we were asked to support Hitler's war-like policy with weighty arguments aimed at showing that Germany had been obliged to adopt a policy of action merely because she was forced to do so by the other states, though she had adopted that policy solely in the interests of justice and to tackle the tasks confronting Europe. We were to gloss over casual deficiencies and contradictions that existed in the Hitlerian system, and to emphasise always more and more the indispensable co-operation between Rome and Berlin. When we met of an evening in a café, some of us journalists used to make fun of these turns and twists in Fascist policy. There were Francesco Antinori, a journalist on our staff, and Massimo Caputo of the *Gazzetta del Popolo* (whose Jewish wife belonging to a Frankfort family, had been kept shut up in the German Customs office when she was travelling from Berlin to Vienna, and had been roughly treated and stripped naked because they expected to find some compromising documents on her person) and occasionally Pietro Solari of the *Corriere della Sera*. Solari, who knew Ciano very well, as he had worked with him in the office of the *Tevere*, expressed the view that we should not be astonished at what was going on, and that the young minister was an absolutely unscrupulous man. I myself later on got to know Edda fairly well and decided that she was a very whimsical and capricious woman, full of haughtiness and eccentricity like the Duce; in fact, that she was morally an exact replica of her father.

In the Ministries at Rome changes were made which bore the stamp of Ciano's influence. Capable and faithful officials were dismissed overnight, and their places taken by young nonentities with very little experience, who were known to be Galeazzo's friends. From the outset he had a habit of gathering around him a band of restless mediocrities who were devoted to him, whom he addressed in the second person singular, and whom he took into his confidence so fully that

they strutted about like peacocks as though they were the custodians of important secrets of state. To say at Rome in those days that such and such a man was Ciano's friend was as good as saying that he was well informed about secrets of state—"that he knew what was boiling in the pot". Other blockheads of the same genus began to turn up in Berlin, and the ambassador used to confer with them for many hours in his study. It was difficult, however, to guess what part was played by Massimo Magistrati, Ciano's kinsman, who, while most cordial to me and even seeming to encourage me to stand up to the ambassador, was on good terms with my opponents. Yet everything led me to infer that, by virtue especially of his personal prestige, he would work for an Italo-German pact.

Magistrati's wife was in the habit of confiding incautiously the great projects of the Ciano family, both father and son, to her own hairdresser during the course of a "perm" in a beauty-parlour in the Budapesterstrasse, where she used to boast that everything was now changed in Rome, and that Mussolini merely obeyed the wishes of Ciano. When Signora Magistrati died, her husband brought a lawsuit over the will, against his kinsman, Ciano, and instead of the promising career for which it was said, he was destined, he died as a minister at Sofia, completely forgotten.

The thing that interested me most was the reaction of the Germans. The Embassy in Rome could not have failed to inform the Wilhelmstrasse about the new wind that blew on the banks of the Tiber. Fascist policy no longer showed a deliberately anti-German bias; on the contrary, it seemed from that moment to favour all the movements towards revision of the Versailles Treaty. Even in the Danubian region in which Italy herself was very keenly interested, readjustments were urged on condition of coming to an understanding about the sharing-out of the spoils. The Germans were convinced that Ciano, in Suvich's place, might be a guarantee of collaboration, and Von Mackensen had not failed to look into the possibility of easily winning over the ambitious young minister to a closer co-operation with the

Reich, by giving him the hope that his name would be linked with a glorious epoch of Italian history.

Then began the first visits of Nazi officials to Rome for the purpose of feeling the way. Marshal Blomberg, Minister of War, received an official invitation to Rome, in order to see for himself what Italy's military preparations were like. It was this trip, in my opinion, that started the headlong path to ruin. When Blomberg made his report to Hitler at Berchtesgaden, he must have given a detailed account of what he had seen in Italy, and affirmed that it did not quite come up to the general impression that had prevailed. He must have made it clear to Hitler that Italy was very far from being that military power that all Europe thought her, and that in that direction what little the Duce had done had been in a slovenly fashion. Mussolini, he discovered, had neglected to supply his armies with the latest modern weapons. Blomberg reported that the army was still equipped with old Skoda artillery taken from the Austrians in the Great War—artillery that by now was forty years behind the times, though it had undergone just a few trivial modifications in order to utilise it for mountain warfare. He realised, in fact, that Mussolini's conception of military tactics had just remained in the 1915-1918 stage, when it was all just a question of static warfare. Blomberg thought that the developments that had been attained by Fascism in the domain of aviation, through the work of Italo Balbo, were hardly appreciable, and he had not failed to observe that the Italian aeronautical industry did not possess the plant needed for large-scale production. Blomberg had left for Italy fully convinced that he would see a wonderful pattern of what a warlike nation should be; what he saw instead was mere dilettantism.

In my view this discovery must have made Hitler come to a prompt decision. It would certainly be the essence of *naïveté* to think that even a thoroughly armed Italy would have held back the ruler of Nazi Germany, but the knowledge that the peninsula on the other side of the Brenner was in a state of weakness from a military point of view must have substantially contributed to the speeding up of events. In fact

it is very significant that the first act of positive aggression that Hitler perpetrated was at the expense of Austria. Barely two years previously Mussolini had called out his emphatic, "Halt", when Germany had contemplated moving. Now we found ourselves confronting the first act of a drama of humiliation, degradation and sorrow.

Just as Hitler had hitherto believed that Mussolini was all-powerful, so France and England likewise had miscalculated Hitler's strength. For some time they let him have his way and failed to adopt measures that were essential to check him. They confined themselves to protests that left Hitler indifferent. In his speech in the Reichstag, after the denunciation of the Locarno Pact, the Fuehrer realised that he had made an ineluctable decision. His heart was in a state of tumult as he foresaw that the consequences might be tragic for Germany. He expected France to react violently to the appearance of German troops in the Rhineland, now no longer demilitarised. He even banked on the possibility of war. But the French Government confined itself to a feeble protest to the League of Nations, and the next day instructed their ambassador to return to Hitler to resume the negotiations as if nothing had happened. The British Government preferred to leave the initiative to Paris. No wonder, then, that German propaganda a week later could start anew its voluble protests, turning its attention this time to the Sudeten Germans.

A glimpse of the situation in those days and months is sufficient to convince one that the Wilhelmstrasse had become the pole towards which the eyes of all Europe were directed. A constant stream of British Conservative lords and some Liberal Members of Parliament turned up at Berlin, their apparent object being to feel the pulse of the great sick nation, who, on her bed of bayonets and guns, was every moment going into convulsive fits. Lord Rothermere came to the German capital at least twice a year. Among the most frequent visitors, however, Lord Londonderry, Lord Lothian and Lord Astor were prominent, all more or less convinced that Hitler could be induced to accept a programme of peace for a definite period. The reason for the persistent visits of

these noblemen was that Hitler had given them some grounds for hoping that he would evolve a more moderate political programme. The Fuehrer had a peculiar knack of making people believe that sometimes he was willy-nilly obliged to make grave decisions owing to his exceptional environment, and particularly owing to the lack of understanding of the Democratic powers. No sooner had one of these British notabilities set foot in the German capital than the Nazi Press indulged in a jeremiad about the victimisation of poor Germany.

In Austria the Nazis, for the most part imported from across the German frontier, succeeded by their propaganda in preparing the crisis for which Hitler was waiting to warrant the use of physical force. In the middle of February, 1938, the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg was invited to go to Berchtesgaden to have a conference with the Fuehrer. At that moment, with what was virtually a threat hanging over his head, Schuschnigg must have realised that this was rather an order than an invitation. When he was ushered into the Fuehrer's presence, he found him surrounded by generals looking as solemn as owls, just as though they had been convened for a court trial. There can be no doubt that these generals were there to show the representative of Austria that there was indeed an army to back up the Nazi Government.

What demands did Hitler make on Schuschnigg? Nothing less than that all the Nazis who had been arrested by the Austrian authorities should be released immediately, that the National Socialist Party in Austria should have representation, and that without delay a seat should be given in the Cabinet to a member in Hitler's confidence—that is to say, to Seyss Inquart, who should be entrusted with the important portfolio of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I was at breakfast that morning with Doctor Meyer, director of the Deutsches Nachrichten Bureau, when I was informed by telephone of what had happened. I was amazed that Meyer knew nothing whatsoever about it, although he was the head of the official agency. Perhaps he was merely pretending ignorance of a

matter which had been well discussed in Nazi political circles, and had been planned some weeks before.

Hitler's communication to Schuschnigg was nothing more nor less than an ultimatum, for, as I afterwards learned, he threatened to send the Reichswehr into Austria if his demands were not accepted. I was impatient to learn what attitude Rome had taken, because there was a definite agreement between Italy and Austria, and Schuschnigg, like the late Dolfuss, had received from Mussolini a precise assurance that Italy would be on Austria's side should danger threaten. I could not help wondering whether we would witness a repetition of the gesture of two years previously, when Mussolini sent troops to the Brenner to intimidate Hitler. But I was mistaken. Rome had changed. Mussolini was no more anxious to come to the aid of Schuschnigg than the Sultan would have been to give succour to some remote country in Asia that found itself in difficulties. All the guarantees given to Austria by the Fascist Government proved worthless; Ciano's intrigues had triumphed. But not only did Italy stand aloof. France and Great Britain did likewise, as if Germany had the right to jump on the back of little Austria, which in the past had received so many exhortations both from Paris and London—to say nothing of Rome—to resist any attempt at aggression. My heart bled for my Viennese friends whose sufferings I pictured in my mind. On the spur of the moment I dashed off a few sympathetic lines which I despatched to the Austrian paper which had formerly published, under a pseudonym, a few of my articles.

On the morning of March 12 the first German divisions entered Austrian territory from the direction of Linz. I immediately took train for Vienna on the instructions of Giorgio Pini, the managing editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, who impressed on me to give "a thorough and rousing account" of the occupation of Austria. I fancied that he meant, "Follow up the developments of an Italian victory." But for Giorgio Pini, an enthusiastic admirer of Germany, as he once described himself to me as though it was something to be very proud of, this was not a day of sorrow and dishonour, but one of jubilation.

During the course of my journey I was informed that the Nazis of Linz had welcomed the German Nazis with bouquets and placards bearing the words: "Down with Italy! Down with Mussolini!" These Austrian Nazis, knowing nothing of the secret intrigues of the politicians, thought they were still in the days when Italy adopted a challenging attitude when Austria was outraged. It was said that this misunderstanding put Hitler into a perfect frenzy. He was in Munich or Berchtesgaden—I cannot at the moment recall which—and was ready to enter Austria as soon as his troops had occupied Vienna. It was here that he received a visit from Prince Filippo d'Assia, who had come specially by plane from Rome bearing an enthusiastic letter from the Duce, congratulating his German brother dictator on his energetic action with regard to Austria.

There was no fighting. The little Austrian nation, already under the heel of the Nazis, had lost all inclination to resist. That same night Schuschnigg was superseded by Seyss Inquart. It was now clear why Hitler had been so insistent that this man should go to the Ballhausplatz; it was, so to speak, slipping a dagger in the clothing of an accomplice, in the house in which the crime was to be committed.

The Reichswehr were entering Vienna at the very moment when I was alighting from the train from Berlin. I found the city practically lifeless, its shops closed, trains at a standstill, the walls everywhere disfigured with the Swastika scrawled in charcoal, and slogans written on the walls of the public lavatories. In some quarters there had been some clashes with Nazis. But everything was absolutely quiet, until suddenly the asphalt pavement of the Ring began to reverberate with the thunder of heavy military vehicles coming from the North. For the second time since 1933 German armed forces were "occupying"; the first occupation was in the Rhineland—the second now in Austria!

When the Nazis asserted that they were greeted in Austria with the welcome due to liberators they were lying. In a sporadic burst of a jubilation too noisy to be genuine the hand of Austrian Nazis, who had known how to prepare the ground

to the best advantage, was obvious. They had by sheer violence forced a portion of the people to go into the streets to salute Hitler's soldiers, and had taken up points of vantage to drive away all those whom they suspected of being favourably disposed towards Schuschnigg's Government. They then arrested large numbers of these latter and manhandled them so savagely that they were covered with blood. On the second day they demanded that flags with the Swastika should be produced and distributed large quantities of them. They laid siege to the quarters of the Austrian workers' movement, in order to forestall a reaction from that section. When Schuschnigg left, Seyss Inquart installed himself in the Ballhausplatz with a cohort of nonentities among whom I recognised faces which I had formerly seen in Munich and Berlin. The man who took over the post of Chief of the Press Bureau of the Government, was a Levantine half-caste whom I had met previously at the Austrian Legation in Berlin, when he had told me that he was a journalist, and a supporter of the Austrian Government. When he recognised me he flushed scarlet, but almost immediately he recovered his aplomb and assumed a listless and arrogant air as though he had held the post for years. I had called on him to get my official pass renewed, as otherwise I would not have been able to move about Vienna.

I put up at the Bristol, which was already packed with special correspondents of the various European newspapers, to say nothing of business men who had come for the Sample Fair. Later on I went to the Imperial, directly opposite, because they said that Hitler would stay there. I was anxious to get some statement from him, as it struck me that it would be interesting to hear what the Fuehrer would have to say to an Italian journalist, on the occupation of Austria. My colleague, Enrico Massa, of the same paper, offered me his rooms, so that I would be able to prepare my articles undisturbed and telephone them to the *Popolo d'Italia*. He was a man of poise and alertness, a hard worker, and of great help to me during those hectic hours, as he had heard of the difficulties in which I was placed in Berlin in my dealings with Attolico and the German authorities. He now saw how the

Nazis had endeavoured to make it impossible for a certain number of our foreign colleagues to continue their work in Vienna undisturbed, to such an extent that some of them were obliged to pack up their belongings and clear out. I went in quest of my friend Vanda R. who had worked with Eugenio Morreale and had done vacation relief work for all the correspondents of the Italian press in turn. She is a lady with prodigious patience and goodwill and the best fellow-worker I know. She worked in the Press Bureau of the Legation with Cristiano Ridomi, who had got promotion as an attaché more by the patronage of Ciano than through his own merits. She received me with open arms, and, demanding a cigarette, as was her habit, suggested that we should go for breakfast to the Capri, a little Italian restaurant in the Graben, joining Magda Caputo, the wife of Massimo Caputo, whose parents lived in Vienna. We could not speak with the same freedom in the precincts of the Legation.

Vanda gave me a picture of the dramatic days that had preceded the revolution. Emissaries from Hitler had come to Vienna some weeks previously to prepare the ground by alarming the population by a series of lying rumours. She said that among other false assertions it was stated that Austria was in danger of aggression at the hands of Italy rather than of Germany. She told me of the threats Schuschnigg had endured at the hands of the Nazis, and how he had appealed for help to Mussolini. But this time it was in vain. He did not even receive a reply. He was ordered not to leave his rooms in the Austrian Chancellery where he was told to consider himself in a state of house arrest. The Nazis were planning to have a formal trial to regularise their responsibility for dismissing Schuschnigg. Fräulein Czernin who, as was well known to everybody, was Schuschnigg's inseparable companion, had left Vienna. There was a lot of talk about Rothschild, who, it was rumoured, had been arrested. As one of their first acts, the Nazis had tried to sequester the fabulous wealth of the Hebrew banker, but this had been transferred to London and notice was received from the London banks that no draft or bill would be paid by them,

even if it bore the Rothschild signature, as he might have been forcibly compelled to hand over his capital to Nazism. Another thing the Nazis yearned for was to lay their hands on Austria's gold, but it seems that they found far less than they had expected. The impression the dreadful nightmare gave me was that I had fallen into the hands of brigands in a desolate region.

I waited for Hitler for a couple of days. At length he arrived like a Caesar, followed by all his political and military general staff, having made a spectacular entry into the city. In the years that followed I had occasion to be present at other entrances of this type, made by the Nazi chief into countries that had been occupied by the German forces, but I can conscientiously say that there was no difference between the reception accorded to Hitler in Vienna and his reception, say in Prague, Warsaw and Paris. It was all just a veneer, superficially covering the seemingly apathetic resignation of the Viennese people who tried to hide the revolt that was seething in their hearts. The Austrian people did not by any means revere their conqueror. The German troops had taken possession of the whole city with lightning speed. The commander-in-chief had installed himself in the Grand Hotel, from which were issued such draconian edicts as the curfew, the order for absolute obedience to the German officials, and the surrender of all weapons.

In Hitler's wake also followed the Prince of Hesse as well as Dietrich, with both of whom I was very anxious to keep in touch, as I hoped through their medium to let the Fuehrer know that I was there to interview him on the instructions of my paper. It was the Prince who acted as intermediary and took me to Hitler. He had already put on his cap, getting ready to leave his quarters to go to a meeting in the Schloss. The head of Nazi Germany did not give me his hand this time. He fixed me instead for some moments with fanatical eyes that betrayed the interior tumult of his soul. Choosing his words carefully, he exclaimed, "Say through the medium of your paper, that I am grateful to Mussolini for what he has done. Mussolini is a great statesman, and I shall never forget

the attitude he has adopted on this occasion." As I was not satisfied with the plain statement, which struck me as only of relative importance after all, he added a few other commonplace phrases and statements beneath which it was easy to see the profound satisfaction he felt in his soul at finding himself the patron, so to speak, of Austria—the Austria from which, many years previously, as a very young man, he had shaken the dust from his feet because he was disgusted with its corrupt system of life.

That evening Dietrich expressed a desire that I should accompany him on a tour through the streets of Vienna, which he was now visiting for the first time. He proposed treating himself to a visit to a Viennese *boite* to see a simpering levy of beautiful women. He had changed from his uniform into civilian garb. But we found every place closed—in most cases because the Jewish proprietors had fled, but in some owing to shortage of staff. We strolled around for an hour, always coming up against locked doors. We were obliged at length to ask a passer-by for guidance. He was, of course, unaware that he was talking to one of Hitler's chief henchmen, and told us quite candidly his views about things, indulging alternately in lamentations over Austria's fate and curses on the Nazis, whose advent meant the utter ruin of his country. "You won't find any show open", he said. "For us Viennese this day is a day of sorrow." While he was talking I was trying to study in the semi-darkness the hardening expression on my illustrious companion's face.

My brief interview with Hitler had the effect he had intended. A new link in the chain of the Axis had been forged. As I foresaw, I found Attolico jubilant on my return and unusually lavish in his hospitality. Temperamentally a notoriously stingy fellow, he broke the fetters of a life-long habit, and gave us a very sumptuous reception.

Weeks merged into months without anything being heard from Rome. The echo of a speech by Chamberlain in the House of Commons, in which he regretted that he had been unable to adopt any efficacious measures owing to the momentary military unpreparedness of Great Britain, reached our

ears. It was only in the capitals of the little Danubian and Balkan States that cries of alarm and protests were made about the manner in which the sacrifice of Austria had been allowed to pass unchallenged.

But suddenly the telephones between Rome and Berlin started ringing again. I felt that something big was afoot, but I failed to guess what it was. Magistrati, it was obvious, had some secret which he kept to himself. One got an inkling from his animated expression, from his frequent nods and winks, and from certain reticences and strange allusions. It was the visit, the great visit of Hitler to Italy that was being arranged. Attolico devoted all his zeal and all the technique of his long experience to the preparations for this visit. I believe that in the mere drawing-up of the protocols more than a hundred telegrams were exchanged between the two capitals. In addition to these the long list of points that were to be emphasised in the conversations had to be drawn up. Somebody suggested that it would be better to leave the two chiefs free to carry on their discussions untrammelled by schemes and plans, seeing that, after all, it was not a meeting "between two men of ordinary calibre, but between two demi-gods". I know that everybody had a special task allotted to him. The Agenzia Stefani arranged that it should get an exclusive account of all the proceedings. On behalf of the Agency I was instructed to accompany the Fuehrer in his special train all through the trip, while the other journalists, both Italian and German, would go to Rome in a Press train organised by the Minister of Propaganda. Any other man, with feelings different from mine, would have been proud of this privilege, but I was utterly bored at the prospect. I imagined that my work would be confined to the usual chronicling of triumphal gatherings, padded out with an abundance of flattering adjectives, for which, in my then frame of mind, I felt very little inclination; moreover I foresaw that even physically, it would be an utterly exhausting ordeal.

We left the Anhalt railway station to the strains of military bands and the din raised by hundreds of urchins in the uniform

of the Hitler Youth. I was ushered into a spacious coach very unlike ordinary railway carriages, a luxurious apartment with all the necessary writing conveniences.

The following morning we reached the Brenner Pass where the first salute was given to our guest, first by the Duke of Bergamo and the court officials, secondly by a delegation from the Government with Achille Starace representing the Party. My job was to write my reports during our journey, and to pass them on at every station at which the train stopped, to messengers of the Agency, who were standing by to receive them. As these men would be mixed up with the crowd it would be no easy job to find them. I could not be expected to know each one of the messengers who had been posted by the Stefani along the route from the Brenner to Rome. Things got somewhat muddled sometimes, of course, and one of my reports, instead of being taken to the local office of the Agency, was dumped on the table of the commissioner of Police, while other reports passed through various hands before reaching their destination. The necessity of tracking down the messenger who was to take my work in charge, amidst a crowd during a brief halt made me very nervous.

All along the line from the Brenner to Naples—for after Rome the itinerary included the route to the Parthenopean city—soldiers of the Militia and Carabinieri had been posted as a guard of honour every hundred yards, on both sides of the railway line. I reckon that over 100,000 men must have been required for the job. All the house-fronts that faced the line were decorated with placards and banners on which were inscribed in gigantic letters slogans in praise of Hitler and the Italo-German friendship.

During the course of the journey the Fuehrer did not, so far as I know, do any official work, but spent the greater part of his time looking out of the window, every now and then consulting a map of the line on which were marked all the stations through which the train passed. In his company were most frequently Ribbentrop, Keitel and Thomsen, who was then Councillor of the Legation and acted as an interpreter. But Hess and Goebbels also travelled by the same

train. Twice I was invited to a meal with the Fuehrer. I observed that when the dessert came he retired to his private compartment, and that when he had vanished the others promptly indulged in an animated conversation, smoking their cigars with relish, a luxury that was prohibited in the presence of the Fuehrer. In this way I had a chat with each one of them, and especially with Von Mackensen, from whom I expected some information about the political significance of the visit. A characteristic of the conversations that took place on all occasions of Italo-German demonstrations was that nothing tangible was ever said, there was nothing but an interchange of stupid compliments. I never heard a subject discussed exhaustively, and least of all, a subject dealing with foreign policy. In fact, it seems to me that a deliberate effort was made to evade discussions of this kind.

Here is just a sample of the kind of conversation on Hitler's train *en route* through Italy:

"What do you think of this 'trip'?"

"Wonderful!"

"Did you notice how the crowd cheered for the Fuehrer at Bologna?"

"Yes. It was all unsurpassable, fantastic, simply fantastic! Do you think it will be better still in Rome?"

"Why not? Of course. In Rome you will see the climax."

"Fascism is truly a wonderful thing. Our two leaders will make history. Your Duce is a genius. Yes—I mean a genius."

How can I give any idea of my anger when I found Von Mackensen inclined only for this type of conversation? And this while the Axis was being planned.

We reached Rome late in the evening, alighting at a station outside the walls, which had been beflagged and decorated for the occasion, a station on which the bombs of the Royal Air Force were to fall at a later date during their raid on the Eternal City. Still blinded by the searchlights, I found myself, I know not how, on the Via dell'Impero, where I witnessed the mad charge of a troop of native African cavalry, resplendent with their horsecloths and caftans—a sight suggestive of a

scene from the *Arabian Nights*. The Colosseum looked as if it were on fire. In the general confusion somebody gripped my arm, and pushed me into a carriage. It was Manlio Morgagni, the president of Stefani, in a Sahara uniform, his chest literally covered with cavalry medals. My news service had gone very well, he said, with the Ministry—but I would need to put more soul and more sincerity into it. Sincerity! What a word! Who, I asked myself, had shown this sincerity, starting from Mussolini, who had desired such an extraordinary stage setting, and ending with the rest of the bunch, his servile imitators.

Not even Imperial Rome had ever welcomed with such pompous display its consuls returning from their triumphs in foreign lands. It seemed to me a desecration of Rome. These monuments, I reflected, had seen very different glories from this; they did not deserve the insult of having to give right of way to this violator of pacts, this oppressor of Austria, this persecutor of the Jews, with all his retinue of degraded and uncivilised bullies. Why had they summoned me to Rome? I would have preferred a hundred thousand times not to have been taken away from my work and from my family just to come to Rome to endure such bitterness of soul and such discomfort. I could not help asking myself whether the Italians were conscious of the crime that was being committed in associating our nation with such a monstrous conspiracy.

Nothing was done that night. Exhausted by my journey and by anguish of soul I went to the hotel and slept. In the same hotel, the Maestoso—formerly the Majestic, but after the imposition of sanctions Mussolini had changed all the names of streets and establishments from their French and English titles—stayed the delegates of the German Ministry of Propaganda, headed by Boehmer, as well as all the representatives of the foreign press. Boehmer was literally exuberant with glee to find himself amidst all the splendour of the Rome of those days. He followed with rapture the procession of Roman girls with very short skirts and eyes flashing fire.

As for the people of Rome, they followed their normal routine of life and did not trouble themselves too much about

Hitler. Hitler's visit was the theme of many jocose remarks in the city. The police had arrested thousands of even perfectly innocent people as a measure of precaution. The German guests were kept very busy attending the numerous receptions and official banquets arranged in their honour, and were hardly able to cope with the extensive programme, as they dashed to and fro along the Via Veneto, while in the evenings they mingled in the luxurious hotel bars with the citizens who looked on with casual indifference at such sights as that of a couple of Germans sitting in the bar of the Maestoso in a condition of helpless drunkenness after having spent all the money they possessed. When I ran into the corpulent Brueckner, one of Hitler's adjutants, he was radiant with glee because, at a banquet at the Quirinal, he had sat beside an authentic princess of royal blood, who was, furthermore, a most beautiful lady. He had had a most delightful chat with her, at the end of which, at his request, she had taken her visiting-card from her purse and given it to him. This visiting card he showed to everyone he met, as though it were a trophy won by him in battle.

As for the Fuehrer, he simply gorged himself on archæology. Not satisfied with official visits to the chief monuments, in which he was always accompanied by Mussolini, on whose lips was forever an enigmatical smile, half-ironical, half self-satisfied, Hitler used to leave the Quirinal early in the morning to do a bit of exploring on his own account. He was fascinated especially by the Pantheon, to which he returned twice. Again and again he expressed admiration for the technical skill of the Roman architects who could construct such everlasting walls and vaults. The military reviews and air force pageants went off with rather indifferent success, because Jupiter Pluvius chose to display his capricious power just in time to hamper them. And to think that poor Mussolini had staged those parades for the express purpose of impressing Hitler with Italy's military might! But it was obvious that these reviews mattered far less to Hitler than the prospect of conquering the spirit of the Italian people and tethering Mussolini and Fascism to his own chariot.

On the evening of May 3 he spoke after the Duce from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia before a crowd picked by the Propaganda Department of the Party and by the Police Commissioner. A special body of agents had been hired to mingle with the crowd, and make the requisite noises expected from an enthusiastic gathering. The Fuehrer, who was boiling over with emotion, made a grand gesture. In solemn tones he declared that he had given up for good all claims to the Alto Adige, which would remain an Italian province for ever, and added that he would bequeath the observance of this oath of renunciation to his successor, as a spiritual legacy. This promise, incidentally, recalls to my mind just another promise made by him—this time to France—that Alsace would never again be touched. But there are certain things that Hitler has got into the habit of declaring when he is contemplating some coup in the exactly opposite direction; there are promises and oaths in which no faith should be placed. As a matter of fact, when Northern Italy was occupied after Badoglio's armistice, did not the Germans promptly declare that the Alto Adige would once more become a German province?

The European chancelleries regarded this memorable evening merely as another of the Fuehrer's theatrical gestures that were destined to leave things as they found them. It was, they thought, just a mere exchange of courteous sentiments between two dictators, which could not possibly have any important European reactions. In reality, however, the European Governments would have given much to know what were the secret agreements drawn up between Hitler and Mussolini for the government of their future policy on the Continent—arrangements, the nature of which never came to light. Apparently the agreement between them was, for the moment, only drawn up on broad general lines; but that a political pact was, at any rate, a thing of the future could be taken as definitely settled. It is exceedingly unlikely that Hitler would take Mussolini into his confidence with regard to all his plans. It would not be the first time that he reserved the right of springing certain surprises even on his very best

friends. But it may be taken for granted that Mussolini knew about the attack on Czechoslovakia.

From Rome the visitors proceeded to Naples, in order to give Hitler an opportunity of inspecting the Italian naval forces. I could not attend the review, as my wife was in Naples with our baby and I was burning with desire to see them again. At the moment of leaving the city that same evening an amusing incident occurred. The Fuehrer was due to be escorted to the station immediately after the second act of "Il Trovatore", which was being performed with a magnificent setting at the San Carlo Opera House. The programme of the evening's ceremonial, which had been very elaborately arranged, had allowed for a very brief interval just to give our guests an opportunity of changing from their formal dress into travelling garb. The performance at the Opera House, however, lasted a little longer than had been anticipated, and the guests had to hurry away from the theatre to catch the train. The Fuehrer had no time to change; the consequence was that he reached the station, where the large German colony with the standards of the Party had gathered to greet him, not in his usual S.A. uniform but in an ill-fitting frock-coat, and wearing on his head a silk hat that came down on to the nape of his neck, completely covering his ears. Never before had the Fuehrer been seen in public in such a rig-out, and he took all the blame on himself for appearing in such an embarrassing situation before Germans who were seeing him for the very first time. Von Buclow, who was master of ceremonies on that occasion, resigned his post immediately on his return to Berlin.

At Florence, in the presence of the frescoes of the Renaissance, Hitler's romantic soul became fastidious. He told me subsequently that the hours of joy which he experienced on the Arno eclipsed his satisfaction in having been to Rome. Even then he fancied that the welcome he received was more intimate and more cordial than in the capital. During his visit to the office of Dino Alfieri, then Minister of Popular Culture, he who more than any others seemed to exult in the false atmosphere of an Italo-German friendship, hit upon

the idea of starting an Italo-German daily in Berlin. It never developed into anything, because Attolico (peace to his ashes, now that he is dead!) was opposed to it on the grounds of economy.

Mussolini followed the Fuehrer like a little puppy dog from gallery to gallery, where the masterpieces of Raphael, Giotto, Piero Della Francesca, Botticelli, Mantegna, Michelangelo, the Veronese artists, and a thousand others seemed to warn Italy's guest, satiated with conquests, that there were other values, the values of the spirit, that made life more worth living than all the aspirations for material domination.

After Florence the Nazis started for home. But not before they had rifled the shops of Florence of magnificent lace, of works of art, and in some cases of more commonplace things such as silk and eatables, which they took back with them to Germany. Instead of accompanying them as I should have done, I hastened back to rejoin my family and enjoy with them a month of repose and meditation in our little house in Capri.

The visit had marked the beginning of a period which I foresaw would be very stormy. The Government Offices in Rome were by now completely dominated by the idea of being able to form a bloc of forces, which they called the Axis, extending from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. This was to replace the Rome-London balance which had been for many years a guarantee of peace for Europe. They did not realise that they were thereby playing Germany's game without in any way serving the interests of Italy. They did not see the violent tempest approaching rapidly across the firmament of the Continent. They did not plumb the depths of Hitler's policy, and did not so much as suspect that Hitler had taken the trouble to come to Rome for ends of his own. Nor did they guess why the Reich suddenly displayed such an interest in an Italy which, until then, had been considered an obstacle to the German plans of conquest in south-eastern Europe. They did not perceive that Rome, by agreeing to this bloc, was becoming an accomplice of Berlin in an adventure fraught with the most tragic possibilities, and in a betrayal which would be prejudicial to the interests of civilised Europe.

There was much talk about the "personal friendship" between the two leaders, as though it were a reliable guarantee; but this "personal friendship", even admitting that it was a fact, which seems rather doubtful when we consider the temperaments of the two men, could not constitute any guarantee, as in order to be such a guarantee, it would need to be backed by the approval of the two nations. Now the spiritual premises for an Italo-German accord did not exist. It would be wise before talking of such an accord to peruse a wide range of literature covering several centuries, and to analyse the condition of the relations existing between Italy and Germany quite recently in cultural and economic spheres.

Why, then, did Mussolini arrange for the great Exhibition at Rome for the year 1942, an exhibition which was destined to be a sort of Olympiad of peace and of collaboration between the nations of the world? He was aware of the efforts which London especially was making to avoid a future clash of armed forces in Europe, and in its infancy had even co-operated in this task of conciliation. The Duce knew that neither London nor Paris wanted a war, and that a war would not be approved of by their respective parliaments except as a matter of extreme and ineluctable necessity; like any other statesman on the political stage, he ought at least to have surmised that Hitler was arming, in the teeth of England and France, to conquer Europe in accordance with his own foolish whim.

We must only conclude that Mussolini's star was waning, because otherwise he would not have acted as he did. It was clear that what led to his precipitate downfall as a politician and as a statesman was his congenital worship of mere brute force. This had accompanied him from infancy; now it appeared again to triumph over every principle of moderation. Mussolini, in fact, discovered unexpectedly in Hitler and in Nazi Germany what he had not wished to perceive in them for so many years, and that was the ideal of force asserting itself, and the dynamic energy capable of leading to the creation of a world different from the old world with an irresistible tendency towards expansion. He was destined to mis-

calculate, as he had miscalculated so many other times, when it was a question of interpreting men and events.

Furthermore, what was he himself until then? The obstinate, rabid obsessed bandit of Fascism who aimed at making the whole nation Fascist. Yet he did not succeed in his aim. Italy had become accustomed to Fascism, as in time one becomes accustomed, in spite of everything, to the distressing spasms of coughing of an invalid who is always beside one, who is a victim of chronic catarrh. But one feels no call for that reason, to imitate him. Fascism was a costly game. The Italian people never knew what it was in reality, but Mussolini's pronouncements with regard to it were constantly shifting. He had not only not defined and created a system, but he had hardly so much as employed an evolutionary process. Yet the people would have been satisfied if at least he had not evolved a disastrous system of political economy. But under his regime the lira had never succeeded in rising from the level of depreciated currency, and the Corporate Organisation had superadded a vast bureaucracy to the bureaucracy already in existence, without leading to any worth while results in economic development. Finally the Party cost millions, to say nothing of the Militia. With national loans he had not succeeded in making good the financial deficit and his foreign trade was cramped by the frequently unfair competition for international trade, especially on the part of Germany.

If Mussolini had disclosed his own ideas and his own programme to the nation in that crucial moment when he declared that he desired to link the fate of Italy with that of Germany, the nation would not have given its consent. But he did not do so. Instead he acted arbitrarily, and following his instincts he relied on his own strength as a dictator.

Chapter IV

OBSERVATION POST

I MUST talk about the summers of Capri. Who can say how long it will be until I enjoy such summers again; until I can return each year to get fresh mental and bodily vigour? I used to make my way back to Capri from the remote places where I had worked with the express purpose of forgetting the irritations, the fatigues and the disillusionments of my task. There are glorious moments when the island of Tiberius, bathed in dazzling brilliance, is an image of paradise on this earth; you fancy you hear the land sighing for the water, as though a subterranean mysterious sap might be said to be rising through the vegetation of the island. Capri unfolds to the sun its gardens full of gourds and orange trees which seem aglow with little flames. At noontide it is delightful to loiter on the little square, which is a kaleidoscopic change of types and races, with a medley of idioms from all parts of the world. At the sound of the church bell the birds scatter in a panic and everybody nearby is obliged to stop his ears. If you do not buy the newspaper from the newsagent on the square, you know nothing about what is happening in the world. If you do not tune in the radio at the proper hour you live in a child-like ignorance of the happenings of our sorrow-smitten era. What a pity that these moments of rest are so fleeting!

Had it not been for the large numbers of German tourists, some of whom were leading personalities whose presence recalled the turbulent political phase brought about in Europe by the Fatherland, who in Capri would have thought of the crisis that was about to come to a head in Czechoslovakia? When I left Rome there was nothing in the air to suggest imminent complications, for Rome is a city with a tendency to forget everything—even war itself—a city which someone or other described as inhabited by cynics and parasites, simply because he failed to understand its indifference towards the

great dramatic happenings in the life of Europe. But the Romans are built in that way. Nothing will arouse them from their phlegmatic attitude and from their indifference; under the protection of the dome of Saint Peter's, and favoured by the special blessing of the Holy Father, they seem to carry on an existence unaffected by mundane happenings.

Having witnessed the display of studied and false camaraderie that was made such a thing between Fascists and Nazis, brought to a head by Hitler's visit, the Romans promptly proceeded to forget the very existence of a Germany, of a Fuehrer, of a cataclysm brooding over Central Europe. The Ministries were busily engaged in counting up the honours and distinctions mutually exchanged by the two political parties with such lavish prodigality, and never troubled to enquire whither that political development was leading.

The brief stay of the Germans in Rome had led to the inauguration of a series of innovations on Nazi lines. Thus, to quote one instance, some people were itching to imitate the anti-Jewish propaganda, though not only was there never any Jewish problem in Italy, but up to that very moment anti-Semitism had been repudiated and ridiculed by Fascism. Naturally, it was a favourable opportunity for creating new commissions and new departments for giving jobs to a gang of unemployed loafers who were as incompetent as they were ambitious. In fact, I met one of them, a fellow who all his life had been utterly worthless, and had been dismissed from countless jobs. Well, this fatuous rascal one day flabbergasted me with the information that he had been put in charge of the "Racial Department". Even Giovanni Ansaldo, who had written such a brilliant denunciation of the absurd and anti-historical theory of anti-Semitism, now deemed it more expedient to follow the new trend, and undertook the editorship of the daily paper *Telegrafo*, in Leghorn, which was to serve as Ciano's publicity medium. But the leading spokesman of the anti-Semitic campaign was Telesio Interlandi, the managing editor of *Tevere*. The semi-aristocratic Neapolitan Evola had already become its theoretical exponent. One could not help thinking with commiseration of all the Jewish

families in Berlin and other places in Germany, who, in order to escape persecution at the hands of the Nazis, had sacrificed almost all their worldly possessions to come to Italy with a few personal belongings. For these unhappy people their sufferings were now to begin afresh. The opportunist Dino Alfieri, having observed the growing political importance of Ciano, and accepting without question the new Germanophile policy of the Government, hastened to make certain changes in his own Ministry of Culture calculated to bring it into line as closely as possible with the Ministry so efficiently controlled in Germany by the "little doctor", Joseph Goebbels.

During my month's stay at Capri I had forgotten all those things, or rather I had deliberately refused to think about them. In those thirty days Berlin had, meanwhile, charged the first mine with a high explosive which was destined to put all Central Europe into a state of confusion. The Runciman mission had encountered rather a thorny problem in the Sudeten region. This had been brought about by the local Nazi group, led by the schoolmaster Conrad Henlein, who had turned demagogue by special appointment by Hitler. The object aimed at was apparently autonomy within the compass of the Czechoslovakian State, but in reality preparations were on foot for annexation to the Reich, for it is clear that if the Sudeten population were placed under Henlein's absolute control, they would immediately arrange for the formality of elections to bring about the incorporation of their territory in Greater Germany. I know a great deal about Czechoslovakia and the Sudeten region, in which my wife was born. If there are Germans between Bodenbach and Eger, they are more Nazi than the Nazis themselves—or, at least they were so. Under Czech rule they never had any grounds for complaint. They never lacked anything, they had no limitation put to their rights, their German tongue was, in addition to Czech, recognised as an official language, and finally they had as much work as they wanted, and were able to live very cheaply. After the annexation to Germany, the same ethnic group—which consisted in reality of ex-Austrians and not of Germans from the Reich—regretted a hundred

times over that they had heeded the blandishments of Hitler, for from that unlucky day they knew nothing but heavy taxation and a rise in the cost of living. But at the time the mirage was beautiful, they became fanatically enthusiastic and mob fighting took place throughout the whole territory between Czechs and Germans. Runciman's mission proved abortive; moreover both the London and Paris Governments seemed inclined to show a certain amount of toleration for the agitation that had been started by Henlein.

In the beginning of August I had to accompany Manlio Morgagni, managing director of the Stefani Agency, to Jugoslavia for the meeting of the News Agencies' Alliance. Petrovic, the director of the Avala Agency, with the support of his Government, organised a trip along the coast of Dalmatia right to the frontiers of Albania on a Yugoslav boat. We left Venice, when the international bathing season was in full swing, with the Lido swarming with artists from all parts of the world who had come for the Goldoni open-air Exhibition, directed with the most superb skill by Simoni and Salvini, as well as for the Cinema Exhibition. We went down to Trau, Spalato, Sebenico and Ragusa, where we bathed in the limpid Adriatic at the estuary of Cattaro. Afterwards we scaled by car the ridge of the mountain of Montenegro. At Cettinge I spent some very enjoyable hours with a mountain guide, who revealed to me the most intimate secrets of the life of Nikita, the last venerable King of Montenegro, father of Queen Elena of Italy. He acted as my guide when I browsed among the antiques of an unpretentious palace, with its faded photographs of all the European sovereigns and the exceedingly interesting collection of orders of chivalry which Nicola had possessed, and its museum of arms. Finally he showed me the thousand-year old oak under which the King used to preside, like a druid chief, over the trials of the bandits. Dear, romantic microscopic mountain kingdom, which served as the cockpit of so many European momentous clashes.

At the congress which was held at the University of Belgrade, I met all our old acquaintances of previous congresses—Menot, the head of the Havas Agency, with his charming daughter,

who took a great interest in the elegant and experienced Yugoslav professional dances; good old Murray of Reuter's, with his eternal smile; the genial Ritzau of Copenhagen; Reuterswaert for the T.T. of Stockholm; Dr. Mejer of the D.N.B., and all the others—about a score of them. These meetings always opened with expressions of regret for the competition which the European Agencies had to oppose to the United Press, with its very widespread system of organisation all over our continent. In the programmes of the proceedings of the Alliance no political question of any kind whatsoever was raised, the debates always being devoted exclusively to technical and commercial problems. Menot was an ideal president, with the assistance of the Swiss representative, who acted as secretary. By a stroke of good luck Morgagni, when he took part in these conferences, shed all his Fascist prejudices and became once again the technical organiser, absorbed in his task of looking after the interests of the Stefani service in Europe. He was very astonished that his German colleague did not display the same zeal and spirit which he, with his truly Roman temperament devoted to his task. Indeed, Morgagni was so zealous that he was regarded as a sort of "enfant terrible" of the Alliancc. To sum up, I believe these conferences served no further end than merely that of a social reunion, of creating an appearance of solidarity of work between the heads of the various news agencies.

At Oplenaz we visited the mausoleum in which King Alexander, who was murdered in 1934 at Marseilles, is buried. The Yugoslav countryside in the summer months consists largely of great expanses of rich golden vines. All round Oplenz the vines reach heavenwards in a riot of wealth that reminds one of the vineyards of Ferrara at vintage. At Belgrade we put up in a huge hotel recently opened though not yet completely furnished. My colleague Corrado Sofia took Morgagni and me to meet the Italian Minister Indelli, now Ambassador at Tokio, a man with a pronounced Tuscan accent and an inexhaustible loquacity who gave us a detailed account of the unfair commercial competition organised by

the Germans in Jugoslavia. It was not the first time that I had been informed about this state of affairs. The president of an Italian aircraft company in Milan had told me about the difficulties experienced by Italy in selling her aircraft engines in South America, because German agents were on the spot ahead of the Italians in order to disparage the Italian products and extol the machines which Germany claimed to be constructing, though they had none yet ready to put on the market.

The Yugoslav Court, with young King Peter, and the Regent Prince Paul, was at that time in Bled, as usual, and had established the Government and the foreign legations in the vicinity. So we set out for Bled where we enjoyed a few days of perfect repose. It was the summer of 1938—Chamberlain's summer, when that unfortunate statesman was trying every possible means to avert the impending cataclysm. He kept dashing from one ruler on the Continent to another, carrying out fatiguing negotiations which were far too great a strain for his age, always preoccupied with the aim of averting the inevitable solution of the imminent problem by force of arms—a solution which appealed so utterly to Hitler. He first went to Bad Godesberg where he failed dismally; then he appealed to Mussolini, knowing the Duce's close friendship with the Fuehrer, and besought him to intercede with Hitler and induce him to desist from the design of attacking Czechoslovakia. Finally Chamberlain went to Munich, and found himself with the French statesman, Daladier, in a hopeless impasse wherein he was obliged to give way to the despotic will of the German Chancellor. As a last effort, seeing further troubles ahead, the old man tried to tie down Hitler to a protocol pledging England and Germany to live in mutual peace, as the only means of saving what there was yet to save, seeing that all the rest might now be regarded as dead loss. And this was the sum total of the results of Chamberlain's tremendous efforts in the space of the one month of September, 1938.

The mission entrusted to Lord Runciman proved clearly that no departure had been made from the old tactics. The

only lion that could now roar in Europe was Adolf Hitler. The other Powers had only their press, which could do nothing but denounce the crimes premeditated in Berlin. American, English and French special correspondents dashed about from one capital to another to verify local situations and to show the world that a second act of aggression even more brutal than the rape of Austria was on the verge of consummation. But it was realised that the Governments of London and Paris had secretly decided to permit Hitler to enter the Sudeten territory, only because it would be futile to try to stop him. In a word, the people in that region had been already sacrificed. In Paris, the followers of de Brinon bowed with deferential courtesy before the fascinating vision of a new Napoleon—a German one this time—and bewailed the decadence which had crippled France so utterly that she had even to abandon the idea of an energetic defence of her own interests in Europe. Stavinsky's France was really not dead yet. To put the matter in the most courteous phraseology, one might describe the foreign policy of the governments of the Popular Front and of the Radicals who had followed one another as a delicate piece of embroidery made by the patient refined hands of a dignified old lady, a piece of embroidery that was of no practical use. There was a close alliance between France and Czechoslovakia, but France would not have raised a finger to help the little republic with which she was so friendly. The greatest bitterness must certainly have been felt in the benches of the Vltava in Hradcany.

The stormy prelude to the drama was the congress of the Nazi Party at Nuremberg. As was his wont, Hitler kept all Europe intent with bated breath, following in a state of the deepest apprehension the impetuous blarings of the orchestra which he directed at Nuremberg. It struck me that the audience of the European public that year instead of going to Bayreuth to hear Wagner's operas directed by Furtwaengler, had gone to Nuremberg to hear symphonies of quite a different type, and no doubt, Hitler left nothing undone to confirm that impression. The orchestra presented two pieces—the sonorous invective against Prague, which concealed a definite threat;

and the lyrico-tragic prelude to the campaign against the Jews. Sauerwein, who, as he said, was on the alert for signs behind the wings, was making prophecies of war every minute.

Most of the journalists who went to Nuremberg, owing to the dearth of hotel accommodation, had to sleep and work for a whole week on a special train drawn up in a most uncomfortable position in a railway siding. Only a few representatives of the Press could find quarters at the Würtemberger Hof, which had been taken by storm by a number of visitors from the Sudeten territory. Two of our colleagues managed to dig in somehow in that hotel, one of them in a miserable little room that had been allotted to him and the other in the primitive lavatory into which his own typewriter had been installed out of consideration for his colleague, who could not write his article owing to the din caused by the keys. In the foyer of the Grand Hotel, where the diplomats had put up, big bets were made about the chances of war or of the Powers giving way, while somebody spread the rumour that France had mobilised and that the German armies were marching on the Sudeten frontier.

When we left after having heard the Fuehrer on the field of Luitpoldhain in his role of god of thunder and lightning, hurling taunts in his own unique style on hated adversaries and imaginary enemies, we were invited to breakfast in the castle of Nuremberg as his guests. Before breakfast, Hitler chatted with his guests for a quarter of an hour on the stone balcony that commands a view of the medieval city, but like a hostess, who, having welcomed her guests, retires immediately afterwards, he did not sit at table with us, but was represented by Ribbentrop.

I do not claim to be a very profound psychologist, but Hitler that day struck me as an excellent actor, just as Mussolini too is an actor, while Ribbentrop is merely a very third-rate dilettante. To see the Fuehrer coming down from his throne, scowling, restless, bitter, satirical and defiant, and quite suddenly become the gentle dreamer, yearning to embrace with tender affection the city that was loved by Hans Sachs and the Meistersingers, a city which, incidentally, is a veritable

jewel of baroque art—all this was well worth observing. Hitler saw a kinship between the panorama of his Nuremberg and his vision of Florence, which he considered the climax of his artistic yearnings.

How can a man who so loved beauty have recourse to violence in order to gratify his own whim? What strange blend of contradictory sentiments is hidden in that restless soul of his? Is he a comedian or a madman? His love of Florence seemed as heartfelt as his burning desire to make Nuremberg what Florence has always been since the days of the Medici, a centre of beautiful and eternal things. How could he reconcile this with his rancour against Czechoslovakia and with his threat to bring all Europe under the sway of Nazi Germany?

In Berlin I received a summons to attend a session of the Tribunal of the People. I was at a loss to guess what the idea was. On the summons were the words: "In connection with the Fink case". Later on I was in a position to see why I had been summoned. Werner Fink, a well-known turn at the Comedians' Cabaret in Berlin, had been arrested on a charge of anti-Nazism. He was constantly poking fun at the régime in his comic lectures, which kept the audience in roars of laughter. When Fink appeared it was impossible for me to secure admission, for the whole house was already booked.

Yet what bearing had all this on me? I should have liked to make some enquiries before turning up in court, but in the general atmosphere of suspicion rife in Berlin society in those days, I might have compromised my own position very seriously had I done so. So I arrived in court, completely ignorant of what it was all about. At any rate it gave me an opportunity of being present for the first—and last—time in my life at one of those awe-inspiring tribunals of the People, which Nazism set up in order to carry out the more thoroughly its tyrannical role. It turned out that I was merely summoned as a witness. The charge against Fink was that he had written in the foreign press articles hostile to the régime. They hit upon me as a witness in view of my post as president of the foreign press association, so that I might tell them if I had

observed anything of this journalistic activity on the part of Fink.

The sessions of the Tribunal were held at that time in a new building in the Bellevuestrasse, not far from the office of our Association, which was in the Hotel Esplanade. In the centre of a spacious hall, which had been recently varnished, beneath a huge portrait of the Fuehrer, were the judges' seats. The court comprised five people, the President, two S.S. officials, a representative of the Wehrmacht and one of the police. There were no lawyers and no public. I do not think the accused was present either, for, although I looked round in every direction, very cautiously of course, I could catch no glimpse of the well-known face of the comedian. I was escorted by a boorish usher to a little bench which looked like a confessional immediately facing the President's chair. In a stentorian voice the president made me repeat twice over all details about myself, laying particular emphasis on my role as president of the Association. The questioning did not last long, as I had nothing to tell. I was completely ignorant of the fact that Fink used to write for the foreign press; I was even unaware that he had ever displayed any journalistic activity.

"But if you still maintain that you know nothing about this case," came the president's final stupid and pedantic question, "are you aware, in your capacity as a journalist, that Fink is able actually to succeed in having these articles delivered to foreign newspapers which make persistent attacks on the Nazi régime?" I might have replied that they had the censorship, and consequently a better means of making the necessary enquiries, but I merely shook my head to show that I knew nothing about the matter whatsoever. As I left the People's Tribunal that morning I no longer had any doubt that these summary and inconclusive judicial proceedings were just face-saving histrionics to give the world the impression that justice still held sway in Nazi Germany, whereas in reality verdicts were already passed and decisions arrived at before the little "show" started.

As I have said, this was Chamberlain's special summer. In international, diplomatic, and journalistic circles in Berlin people talked about the short-sightedness of the British premier, who could not foresee that Hitler, after his invasion of Austria and the Sudeten incident, would be certain to extend his dominions still further, or that by doing so he would also place England in a position of irreparable isolation. Chamberlain was accused of not having realised that the Anti-Comintern Pact, which had been concluded between France and Japan on the initiative of Hitler, was in reality more a revolt against Great Britain than against Bolshevik Russia. Everyone was astonished that he refused to believe in the existence of the powerful armaments organised secretly by Hitler. Apropos of this, the industrial plant of Fallersleben, which had been placed under the control of Marshal Goering and had been known as the Hermann Goering Works, was undisguisedly working on armaments.

The head of the Labour Front, Dr. Ley, was constantly getting new ships laid down. Ostensibly they were intended for joy-cruises for workers, but they were primarily designed for the defence of Germany when the day came. On some of the Berlin roofs began to appear the long barrels of German anti-aircraft guns pointing skywards. All this was 'a clear proof of a state of tension and of a supreme effort to be ready for war.

But Chamberlain was not the only short-sighted statesman. All the European Governments were equally short-sighted, inasmuch as they failed to observe such a swift and large-scale re-armament on the part of Germany. Many of them looked upon the whole business as mere bluff, and thought that Hitler would pull up short at the threshold of war. Poor old Chamberlain made a 'supreme effort and went to Bad Godesberg for a final desperate endeavour to avert war.

In the annals of journalism the two days at Bad Godesberg will be recorded as the most anxious and most unreal in history; for forty-eight hours we were kept busy at the merest random guesswork, at our wits' end to form the faintest idea of what was actually happening. There we were, for forty-eight hours, sitting in front of the two telephones allotted to us,

which were guarded by the S.S. We who were nearly two hundred in number, and had been virtually quarantined in that hotel which was crowded with a host of idle people whose presence there was utterly needless. Before our eyes stretched the lead-coloured ribbon of the Rhine, fading into vine-clad hills. Chamberlain and his legal adviser, Sir Horace Wilson, who stayed with the British legation at the Petersberg Hotel, on the other side of the river, had two long sessions with Hitler and Ribbentrop in the Hotel Dreisen, opposite our hotel. It must be borne in mind that on this meeting at Bad Godesberg, during those terrible moments that passed so slowly, depended the alternatives of peace or war.

Sir Horace was seen walking up and down in the garden of the Dreisen Hotel, evidently exceedingly distressed. He told an English journalist that the situation looked very bad. This, of course, was what might have been expected. Hitler had not gone to Bad Godesberg to listen to exhortations, but to reaffirm his irrevocable decision. The Sudeten area was to be annexed on October the first, come what might; that was to say, after the expiration of eight days. He, the Fuehrer, would listen to no warning about the embarrassment which his arbitrary act would occasion to the Powers. The Powers should learn once for all what Berlin's word meant, when Berlin had come to a decision. The conference had, therefore, been futile, our journey had been futile, the political excitement which we all had undergone, had been futile and superfluous, and there was absolutely no use in our hanging about any longer in front of a telephone receiver, in the hope of being able to send out big news to the world. Again and again I asked myself, and especially after Bad Godesberg, if our feverish energy as special correspondents was not sometimes out of all proportion to the news we got and its reaction on the public. The public, after all, was not waiting to form its judgment on the information we supplied. At Bad Godesberg, with the help of a little psychological acumen and a knowledge of politics, we could have jotted down within an hour of our arrival conclusive and final information about the conference, because nothing could transpire to alter it. That

night, after the news of the meeting was released, Dietrich, the head of the Reich Press Bureau, who was in his pyjamas, received me in his room in the Dreisen Hotel as he was preparing to go to bed. He looked supremely satisfied, and said that what he was telling me would be the first authentic account of the conversations, exclusively for my paper. The words which Dietrich used, as well as I can recall, were, "The Fuehrer has done for Chamberlain. We shall march into the Sudeten area in a few days. London and Paris will see!" He poked fun at the poor British Premier, who had been fighting for peace and justice. My heart beat quicker, however, when I saw that half of what the head of the Nazi Press Bureau had told me had already appeared in the *Popolo d'Italia*. This showed that they were beginning to be just a little uneasy in Italy.

I know for a fact that Mussolini, after the telephone message which he received from Chamberlain almost immediately after his return to London, sent for Ciano, and was obviously rather agitated over the turn things were taking. Chamberlain had drawn a very gloomy picture of the situation. The Sudeten question would certainly be no laughing matter. As for Czechoslovakia, it would fight most courageously for its own right. On the other hand, they must not forget that France was bound to Prague by very definite pledges. London, on its side, had no intention of permitting the triumph of Nazi brute force and despotism. All that could be done was that he, Mussolini, taking advantage of his personal good relations with Hitler, should try to persuade him not to commit an act of folly. The way out which the Duce found was to propose a last minute conference of four at Munich, but it took all his skill to gain Hitler's acquiescence, after prolonged telephone talks between Rome and Berchtesgaden. The proposal was at last accepted "in order to please you, Mussolini".

The one thing that remained most indelibly engraved on my mind with regard to the conference at Munich was the pathetic condition of the poor representative of Czechoslovakia, who every now and then would make despairing appeals over the phone to Leger, the General Secretary of the Quai

d'Orsay and to the Fuehrerhaus, where the conference was held. The unhappy man was not allowed even to come near the hall—to say nothing of entering while the fate of his country was being discussed. His position was like that of the parent of a doomed man who is not permitted to attend the court, but stands about outside in the hope of being able to get some information as to how the trial is going.

The conference consisted of the four big fellows, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier, but as regards the last three, they were there merely to take notice of the irrevocable decision of the first. From every point of view the conference was a melancholy farce. A whole morning and an afternoon were spent in useless discussion about a poor wretch who had already been condemned. The only issue involved was how to legalise the sentence and settle the formalities entailed by his execution. On the first day the valley of the Sudeten area was doomed, on the second day another sector—on the third day—and so on—the annexation to start on the first of October. I was in the hall adjoining the one in which the four heads of governments with their ministers for foreign affairs were assembled in earnest discussion. From time to time Galeazzo Ciano would sally out from the hall to smoke a cigarette in the midst of us, but it seemed to us that the business which had brought him to Munich was of very little interest to him. He appeared to consider it a waste of time to talk about it. As he casually remarked, "The whole thing had been settled some time back". How can I describe the irate expression on the faces of Keitel, Schmidt and Doering, the master of ceremonies, when they saw that, in defiance of all instructions, we had dared to talk in the very anti-chamber of the conference hall. When the conference came to an end late in the afternoon, and the folding doors of the meeting-room opened for the exit of a silent Chamberlain, a gloomy and frowning Daladier, and a Leger and Wilson yearning to breathe freely in the fresh air, I could not refrain from casting a glance at the actual stage of the conference. There I saw Mussolini, beaming all over as he sat alongside Hitler, who was looking quite sure of his ground, as they both

stooped to examine a big map of Czechoslovakia which was spread out on the table, and exchanged remarks, I surmised, about the route of the march into the Sudeten region. Mussolini looked as if he was studying every possible means of pleasing Hitler. Just at that very same moment the telephone conveyed to the whole world—and simultaneously to the anxious Prague Cabinet—the decision which had been made at Munich that a systematic occupation of the Sudeten area should start on October 1st.

If that day is analysed in all its aspects, it is too little to contend that Czechoslovakia was sacrificed. A few months after that first occupation of the Sudeten area, Hitler took steps to extend his sway over the whole territory of that heroic republic, which was cold-bloodedly annexed without any pity or feeling. During the following March the same process was to be followed as in the Schuschnigg episode at Berchtesgaden. This time it was the Czech president Hacha who saw himself forced under threats to go to Berlin to do a thing which Schuschnigg had not dared to venture upon, to wit, to ask "of his own accord" for armed protection by the Reich"—in other words, to ask for occupation of his country by German troops. This would never have occurred had there not been the precedent of that day in Munich. The Munich decision was a bill of exchange in Hitler's pocket. Had that decision never been arrived at, he would have been forced to order the Wehrmacht to march into the Sudeten area to face the stubborn resistance of the Czechs and in defiance of the wishes of the Powers, and we should have been confronted with an open act of violence, a breach of treaties and an outrage on peace.

Even if no other obstacle had been put up to restrain Germany, except the resistance of the Czech army, Hitler would have been morally and juridically compromised and condemned, and perhaps he would not have had the courage under those circumstances, to extend his occupation to Bohemia and Moravia, that is to say, to all Czechoslovakia. But, as things worked out, his success was arranged in advance without his having to put forward formal demands. He now

that a whole territory was handed over to him, whereas he had merely asked for a portion of it. Fate was indeed kind to the Swastika, and the Fuehrer would once more reveal his grateful acknowledgment of the guidance of that "Intuition", which is the motif of all his speeches—a benevolent goddess with a well-filled cornucopia, who seemed for years to have a special predilection for the little man in the brown shirt who took it into his head to dominate the world.

But what about Mussolini and the other actors in the farce? Although that conference had been the outcome of his own special initiative, Mussolini had gone to Munich with a definite foreknowledge that it would end as it did. He had been actuated in making the proposal for the conference solely by the determination to use it as an excellent opportunity for increasing his own popularity in Germany. In fact, he made a triumphal entry into the Bavarian capital with the cordial approval of Hitler, whose ends were served by that pompous gesture. He was escorted through beflagged streets and avenues, amid frenzied acclamations from balconies and windows, and from the serried ranks of the crowds that swirled around him. It looked almost as though the demonstrations had been specially pre-arranged for his benefit. Merely from the spectacular point of view, at any rate, it is interesting to note the difference between the welcome given to him and that accorded to the other heads of foreign governments. The representatives of the Italian Press most decidedly profited by the Duce's popularity, as a result of which they succeeded in doing anything they wanted that day, passing through military posts, breaking regulations, moving freely among those in authority, and finally, taking by assault, alone among the journalists, the very Fuehrerhaus in which the conference was held. Ribbentrop took charge of Chamberlain, and Marshal Goering of Daladier, probably because he felt a certain physical sympathy with the slightly obese figure of the French Prime Minister.

Chamberlain displayed his innate affability to the extent of saluting with uplifted hand the company of soldiers lined up in his honour on the aerodrome of Oberwiesenfeld. Before

leaving Munich on the following morning by plane he paid a final visit to Hitler at his private house and brought away with him from that morning visit, so it has been stated, an extra "scrap of paper", which in reality turned out to be a new and unexpected gift to the Fuehrer. Great Britain and Germany by that "scrap of paper" promised to live on terms of mutual peace, and, in the concluding words of the document: "to continue their efforts to remove any possible grounds for divergence". But what guarantee did Great Britain get that Hitler would not continue to seize territories which did not belong to Germany?

With regard to the attitude of official Fascist circles, it is said that they did not care a jot if Central Europe, having been turned topsy-turvy, should drop finally into the capacious bag of Nazi Germany. During many long years Central Europe was visualised by Rome as just a sort of ethnical mosaic, and it was taken for granted that sooner or later a new reshuffling of its constituent states would be bound to come. For all that, before 1938 Mussolini's Italy would never have accepted a solution of the Central European problem according to the German conception—in fact it would have accepted anything but that. Now, however, that a *rapprochement* between Rome and Berlin had been effected, an Axis pact was on the eve of making Mussolini become an accomplice instead of an opponent of Hitler. In all their successive meetings up to May, 1939, when the Axis became an accomplished fact, the two dictators came to an agreement on the broad lines that Germany should have Central and Eastern Europe, while Italy should control the Mediterranean and Africa. It was presumed, furthermore, that the two parties had come to an agreement as to their mutual co-operation in the international field.

Mussolini's initiative in calling the Munich Conference consequently was just a face-saving gesture. At the Palazzo Chigi they confined themselves to merely recording the change of the German-Czech frontier. Having duly registered in the archives of their Public Record Office this realignment, Roman officialdom resumed the task of moulding that com-

plex pact which was to be called the Axis. It is stated that Mussolini was anxious to restore the political philosophy of Machiavelli; I do not think, however, that his conception of statesmanship was really Machiavellian. I am convinced that he felt that he could thrive politically only by adopting a policy based on supporting, in an ever-increasingly servile manner, the great wrecker of the European continent whom he had once described as "lacking in realism". After the sacrifice of Austria, what other sacrifice would not have been possible? From that moment Mussolini ceased to be a man with a soul and a European consciousness; he placed himself on the same level as Tiso of Slovakia, who, even though possessing the authority and dignity of the head of a nominally independent state, was accustomed to go to the capital of the Reich to receive orders.

I was obliged to be present at the so-called gradual occupation of the Sudeten area, at least in its initial phase when two German Alpine divisions were entering the Eger territory. Goebbels had made a very shrewd calculation about producing effects on us foreign journalists; so it happened that all of us, organised by the Minister of Propaganda and placed under the guidance of German functionaries and officials, arrived at certain points just in time to be present at the approach of the troops. I recall the first halt on a winding road leading to a village hidden in the woods. There were signposts already studded along our route, with German inscriptions suggestive of a training terrain during manoeuvres; and around these posts were gathered groups of peasants with ox-carts and other vehicles, the oxen with their horns festively wreathed with flowers. The division of the Wehrmacht marched in the middle of the road as though on a route-march. The motor-cyclists headed the column. The commanding officers were riding horses and some of the divisions had been brought along by train and some by automobile. There were no complete divisions, but only half divisions. Their forces, all told, so I have been informed, would not have been adequate if the Czechs had offered resistance. But how could Prague think of resistance, when they observed that not one of the great

powers was ready to put up even a moral defence of Czech rights? It was, however, at once a symptom and a test of the state of affairs that the Germans were marching with such confidence, as though they knew they would not be opposed.

The Fuehrer made his entry into the Sudeten area on the second day of its occupation, accompanied by a veritable legion of henchmen, including all the highest officials in the state. The little town of Eger was the first to witness this strange invasion. They had strewn the road with flowers because at the last moment it was prohibited to throw bouquets or flowers from windows or the street; there might be a bomb among them! What unbounded arrogance there was in that first address by Hitler to the Sudeten Germans, in the little central square of Eger in front of a huge baroque fountain which had to suspend for an hour the eternal rhythmic tinkle of its jet of water! His voice trembled with exultation. All around him gambolled a multitude of saucy brats who witnessed such a ceremony for the first time in their lives. In a corner of the square on the extreme verge of the crowd, a local band gave two cacophonous performances of military marches in most unmilitary tempo, oblivious of the fact that the din drowned the voice of the dictator who had not yet finished speaking. When I close my eyes I can still see the array of uniforms behind Hitler, brown, black, and greenish-grey uniforms, the bright red tabs on the collars of the generals, the inevitable display of organised force which has been characteristic of all phases of German imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler, recalling unforgettable old photographs of general staffs surrounding the Kaiser, the long cloaks with double rows of buttons, the spiked helmets, the red tabs, the fierce moustaches which I have always associated since my childhood with the picture of a stubborn, proud Germany—a Germany utterly regardless of anybody's rights.

Along with Cecco Tomaselli of the *Corriere della Sera* we decided to end our visit to the Sudeten area and hire a car to return to Berlin. We broke our journey in a small town, whose name I have forgotten, in the Silesian forest and dined in a little inn, washing down our meal with draughts of old

Pommard. I was severely rebuffed for abandoning the parade into the Sudeten area when half way through it, but I had begun to feel that I could not stand any more.

The following spring Hitler took a brief rest. The treacherous blow against the rest of Czechoslovakia was prepared and struck in silence, without too much drum-beating. In the course of one night Czechoslovakia vanished from the map of Europe. Not even then did the chancelleries of the Great Powers make any protest, and Europe accepted with resignation the new amputation of her exhausted and outraged body.

In January Chamberlain and Halifax paid a visit to Rome—a visit that has not been chronicled because it was futile. Perhaps it only served to convince British statesmen that they could no longer count on the Duce. The Duce ambled behind Hitler like Sancho Panza behind Don Quixote, and Ciano ambled behind the Duce, aping his postures and gestures. They say that Mussolini assumed an air of treating the presence of the British statesmen in Rome as a matter of rather secondary importance, and that on certain occasions he even lowered himself to being rude. In compliance with orders from headquarters the Fascist Press gave little space to reports of the visit, and its comments were very curt and bitter-sweet. Gayda stated that England failed to realise at the proper time the necessity for a revision of the map of our Continent. A hint had been given, too, by Berlin that the speech delivered by Chamberlain in the House of Commons on the necessity for new British armaments deserved severe censure. The *Boersen Zeitung*, organ of the Wilhelmstrasse, which six months previously had extolled Chamberlain to the skies for his give-and-take disposition, now attacked him with all the bitterness of which the editor, Megerle, who was suffering from liver, was capable. What was the idea of this resumption of the manufacture of armaments on the part of Great Britain, the paper asked? Had anything perchance happened in Europe to justify such an extreme decision? Had not all the acts done by Germany up to that moment been in conformity with international law and ethics? What had Germany done to arouse such a state of alarm among the

English Conservative lords? And so on, and so on, with that Olympian conceit and petulance that are so typical of German political criticism. When Germany asserts that she is a victim, we must take her absolutely at her word, and, if possible, make an act of contrition. When others are, however, obliged to make any protest for the maintenance of their rights, Germany is ready to ask with an air of innocent amazement: "Warum so eine Aufregung?" (Why so much excitement?)

Chapter V

THE FEAR OF COURAGE

ALL this time the Italian Ambassador, Bernardo Attolico, had been reposing on his triumphs. The forces making for a policy of close agreement between the governments of Rome and Berlin had succeeded. Their crowning achievement was attained when, at Milan in May, 1938, Ribbentrop and Ciano affixed their signatures to the decisive agreement which was baptised with the pompous title of "Pact of Steel". Made of steel from that moment, in German terminology, were not only the pacts, but also the ramparts erected by Hitler along the frontiers, in order to be able under their protection to carry out at his leisure those deeds of rapine at the expense of the small states. Used in the concrete sense, the term was applied to the defence wall built on the French frontier, known as the Westwall.

Between April and June in that last year of peace Hitler gave us an exhibition of his brilliant exploits in working up the atmosphere to a degree of tension from which war was bound to come as a matter of ineluctable necessity. Having read that Chamberlain had suddenly changed his mind, and had resolved to give up his tolerant and easy-going policy, which until then had been the joy of the Wilhelmstrasse, and had turned to the House of Commons, pointing out necessity for swift re-arming in order to bring Great Britain to the full glory of her mission as a guarantor of peace, on April 1 the Fuehrer indulged in a non-stop spate of abuse of London and the British Premier. Apparently it struck him that he owed this tribute to the man who, for such a long time, had shown in his dealings with him the patience of a saint.

On April 28 President Roosevelt, who from the other continent had followed with anxiety the turmoil which was getting worse and worse in Europe, wrote to Hitler requesting him in the most courteous terms to give at least a promise not to

attack "the remaining nations in Europe that were still free". Could Hitler possibly be surprised at this gesture on the part of America, when he reflected that in less than a year, without even firing a shot, Germany had occupied Austria, the Sudeten area, and finally Bohemia and Moravia—all that remained of Czechoslovakia? The Reich had risen from a population of 65,000,000 subjects to the figure of 100,000,000. In addition to raping Czechoslovakia and Austria it had confiscated the chief centres of war industries—the Skoda works. Hardly had one region been occupied and annexed, when from it the Nazi Party stretched out its tentacles towards further loot. The systematic persecution of Jews and Communists was forthwith put in force on the very first day in the occupied regions. If they kept up that progressive rate of confiscation and persecution, what would be the condition of the rest of Europe?

Hitler replied to Roosevelt with a lying irony that would have utterly exasperated anybody who was not sedate and extremely reasonable. He declared that he had "asked" all those nations which Roosevelt thought were at the mercy of German threats whether they actually considered that they were in danger, and that he had received a "negative" reply from each state in turn. Poland, of course, was not and could not be asked a similar question, because Poland would have given a very haughty reply. "I have not been able to put the question to states like Syria and Palestine", added the Fuehrer, to the intense amusement of his Nazi entourage, "because just at the moment those nations do not enjoy complete independence." In other domains, for instance in certain trials of common gangsters, I have heard the chap in the dock cross-examine his own judges with the same effrontery to show his cleverness.

The irony of the position was that while carrying on these parliamentary interchanges Hitler went ahead with the scrapping of treaties which Germany had signed in the past, denouncing, without further ado, the naval agreement with Great Britain and the pact of non-aggression which had been made with Poland. Only two years previously he had

boasted about those treaties, affirming that inasmuch as Germany could not claim that she had yet become fully armed, the conclusions of such bilateral pacts was tantamount to a guarantee that the Reich intended to do its share towards the establishment of reciprocal and constructive confidence in Europe. Hitler next put forward Germany's new claims, which comprised the return of Danzig to the Reich and the creation of a corridor within the Polish corridor in the form of a narrow tongue of land, in the middle of which there would be a motor-road and a railway, to link up East Prussia with Germany.

Now you see the effects that certain developments can exercise on men and on situations. The fact that he saw Hitler make such a wonderful success of all his acts of brigandage without entailing any really serious consequences for himself, induced Mussolini also to assume the role of assailant, and so it was that he fell upon Albania.

It is a pretty little story, well worth retelling. Albania was ruled by Zog, whom the Fascist Government had considered the most suitable among the Albanian chiefs to assume the crown of Scanderbeg. Along with its protection the Fascist Government assured him some tangible advantages—things which count. But Zog had begun to act rather independently, and had become increasingly more and more disobedient to Rome's wishes. The Minister at Tirana was a diplomat named Jacomoni, whose wife, the daughter of General Cavallero, the Under-Secretary of War, was according to popular rumour, conferring her favours on Galeazzo Ciano. The man who had hitherto given orders to King Zog, and had paid him on behalf of Rome, was this same minister Jacomoni who, in addition to being bound by ties of friendship to Ciano, was privy to his plans concerning the future of Albania. It was decided to depose Zog, and annex Albania to the Kingdom of Italy. These were the days when Ciano had only to express a wish in which Mussolini saw some opportunity for enhancing his own glory and prestige, and that wish was granted without hesitation.

On April 7 the Italian troops entered Tirana. Zog fled

abroad. Albania was incorporated in Italy, and its crown assumed by Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy and Emperor of Abyssinia. Ciano's ambition to be made Viceroy of Albania, was frustrated, for what reason it is not clear. Perhaps Mussolini began to be jealous of the growing influence which his son-in-law was acquiring. At any rate, the post of viceroy was not created, but Jacomoni was promoted from Minister to be Governor. The Cianos, father and son, and all the rest of the family, did not go empty-handed, however, for they could depend upon forty per cent of the shares of the Aipa (Azienda Italiana Petroli Albanesi). The remaining sixty per cent having been entrusted to the control of the Italian Ministry of Communications, of which Ciano senior was the head, was in fact theirs also.

The Romans looked at one another and smiled. The nation was magnificent in its sublime indifference with regard to this adventure, as well as to the others that had preceded it, including the conquest of Abyssinia. The only person to make the customary and suitable noises intended to glorify the extension of the Empire was Virginio Gayda, in accordance with instructions given to him. In the columns of the *Giornale d'Italia* the words "imperial", "Roman", "constructive" and "New European order", appeared in big type. A telegram with Hitler's congratulations gave great satisfaction at the Palazzo Venezia, where it was expected.

When the first hint was given by Berlin of the difficulties in which Germany was placed in the sphere of agricultural labour, because work in the factories, on account of armaments, had absorbed the greater part of the available man-power in Germany, Italy, without losing time, offered a first contingent of her workers, followed by a second and a third contingent until they ran into some hundreds of thousands of men engaged as agricultural labourers in Germany. The anger which this arrangement stirred up in the hearts of many sober-minded Italians could not be expressed in words. These workers were torn away from their national collectivity to go and live as slaves, God knows for how many years, on the soil of Germany, and to be even completely absorbed by her. It looked like a

mass deportation, which was both degrading and humiliating at a moment when Italy herself actually had a greater need for that man-power for her own defensive preparations. To me it looked like the suicide of the nation. Others regarded it as a further triumph for the Fascist régime.

Knowing Germany and its brutal powers of assimilation, and knowing that the Nazi policy made racism total and radical in the sense that it would not permit the use and development of other ethnical groups and other races alongside its own race which it considered the chosen one, the sending of these workers north of the Brenner savoured to me of a renunciation, of servility and slavery. I would rather that they had gone to Abyssinia than to the Germany of Hitler, Rosenberg and Goebbels. Even from the economic point of view, it was a fatal error. The difference between Italian labourers who emigrated to America and Italian labourers sent to Germany is that the former can send money home, while the latter cannot send a penny, Germany being little less proletarian than Italy itself. After a brief sample of work in Germany many of the workers returned home, because, as might be foreseen, their environment was uncongenial. This, however, did not discourage the Fascist authorities, who sent others to replace them. To ensure that the transplantation was a success, they even set up special offices in Berlin for the purpose of looking after the organisation of Italian labour in Germany. Such was the sorry plight to which the genuine brand of corporate economic life which Mussolini had created, to give an orderly system and discipline to the development of labour and productivity in Italy, was reduced. But I believe that at the time Mussolini's thoughts were centred solely on the Axis, and that he had completely forgotten all about the Corporative System.

A fleeting glimpse of Italian life during those months would suffice to show what tremendous mistakes the Fascist Government was making, under the false impression that to support and imitate Germany would be of advantage to Italy. It was impossible to take the express from Rome to Berlin without meeting Italian commissions of all kinds, going to

Germany for the sole purpose of establishing a co-ordination of labour. These commissions, consisting of senators and deputies, frequently accompanied by ministers, were adapting themselves to German desires, and the word "levelling" seems to me the simplest translation of "Gleichschaltung", which means, in addition to other significations, "to be joined together" or "absorbed". We lost something of our national independence with every trip made by a commission to Berlin. Italian economics abdicated their rightful role in deference to the demands of German economics, which claimed that they had to support the most serious and heavy burden of the Axis. This Axis, with its implication of a linking up, presupposes two points, the points of departure and arrival respectively—two poles. In reality, however, it was reduced to just one pole, the capital of the Reich. A satirical saying passed from mouth to mouth in Italy about this time. "Let us imagine," it ran, "that two trains start, one from Berlin with the Fuehrer and the Nazi hierarchs, the other from Rome with Mussolini and Ciano and all the other Fascist simpletons. Then let us grant that these two trains collide at the Brenner Pass. It may be reckoned as a mere misadventure if the travellers in both trains die as a result of the accident; but if, on the other hand, they are rescued, it is a great catastrophe."

There never was seen such an influx of German tourists into Italy as during that summer. The very low rate of exchange for the lira allowed even the most stingy German to travel through the Brenner into the Italian cities, which in those days were provided with every convenience and exhibited a limitless variety of entertainment and luxuries. Venice in particular suffered from a glut of Germans; they were merely birds of passage in Milan, though they literally robbed its shops; in Rome they loafed between the Forum and the restaurants, to take photographs in the first place, and, secondly in quest of good Frascati wine.

After the usual annual meeting of the alliance of the news agencies, which on this occasion was held at Calo, I came to Italy for my month's holiday. A letter from Morgagni

reached me at Milan. He said that he simply must speak to me as soon as possible on a very serious and important matter. We made an appointment to meet at Bologna Station. Morgagni, who had just alighted from the Rome train, came towards me with more than his usual effusiveness, and looking rather disconcerted, he gripped my arm firmly with the paternal solicitude one shows for a friend who has met with a stroke of misfortune. He told me that the German Government had asked that I should be recalled, and added that the head office at Rome felt obliged to accede to the request.

I was not, however, to be upset, he urged, as I would be sent from Berlin to London, where I would represent both the Stefani Agency and the *Popolo d'Italia*. "Take a rest for two months in your beloved Capri," he said, "and get yourself fit for your new appointment." I could not understand why he should show such commiseration for me. I was to be changed to London! It was more than I would have dared to wish for. So good-bye, good old Morgagni. Don't grieve on my account. Luck has come my way. I really believe that the poor creature, who never in his whole life could grasp the gist of certain delicate situations, was flabbergasted at the way in which I received the news he gave me. Perhaps he thought that ten years of Berlin had made me mentally a true denizen to that city.

I reached Capri full of elation at the splendid news, which I communicated at once to my wife. Day followed day during which I revelled in carefree, dreamy indolence with my dear friends, my wife and my son. How I enjoyed that rest in the fairy island, taking sun baths and enjoying every minute that passed. Then, on the eighth day, a telegram from Giorgio Pini, of the *Popolo d'Italia*, rudely awoke me from my day-dream. The telegram, which came from Milan, ran, "I am glad to tell you that your recall from Berlin has been countermanded. Carry on as before. Best wishes." That meant Berlin once more and good-bye to all hopes of getting to London. And to think that I had made all my plans and was just then counting on being by autumn on the banks of

the Thames, where I would meet so many old friends! The devil-may-care spirit induced by eight days in my island home vanished in a puff, and I was once more the serious responsible journalist.

The political situation numbed me once more with its dreary outlook. I had a grim foreboding of war. I had left Berlin with the definite premonition of an imminent outbreak, but I had shut my eyes to the hideous vision in Capri. I had forgotten the German claims and threats against Poland—a Poland that would neither be an Austria nor a Czechoslovakia, but would fight. I had forgotten about Great Britain sloughing her passive attitude of the past. I had forgotten about Hitler, who had just reached the peak of his paroxysm of frenzy, and was now determined on a clash of arms. I had forgotten about Italy trailing closely behind Germany all the time, like an oriental slave chained to the triumphal chariot of a haughty conqueror. I had forgotten the A.A. guns on the roofs of Berlin, and the German Luftwaffe in a state of perpetual mobilisation. It was enough to drive one mad. What a fate was brooding over martyred Europe, which from Versailles right up to the present had never had real peace! And what about Italy, whose fate was in the hands of another lunatic no less dangerous than the lunatic of the Wilhelmstrasse?

I had an acquaintance in Capri, an immensely wealthy man, a native of the island but a naturalised American citizen, who had married a Wisconsin woman. All the inhabitants respected him as a man of standing because his property extended over a quarter of the island. He invited me to his house to ask me, among other questions, why I was going to Germany, seeing that, in my opinion, war was inevitable. When did I think the storm would burst? I told him that we would have a state of war within the next few weeks. He listened to me with great attention, and did not interrupt me even once. Next day he started making preparations to return to the United States. A week later, with piles of trunks and travelling chests, he sailed from Naples. He never sent me so much as a post card to thank me.

This time I did not take my family back to Berlin with me as I had done in the past; I left them in Capri, because the air of Germany reeked with gunpowder. I foresaw with crystal clearness what was impending. Before autumn was over, we should be plunged in the great conflict. It seemed to me that my own position after that recall—which was not unexpected and after the countermanding of that recall, the reason for which eludes me—was exceedingly precarious. There in our little cottage, looking out on the sea, amid our flowering oleanders, my boy would be able to follow up in blessed peace his favourite pastime of chasing lizards, and know nothing of the actual difficulties of living in time of war, with the inevitable restrictions, the eternal uncertainties and the risk of having to snatch up in a hurry a few of the most indispensable things to pack them in a suit-case and fly.

When the Capri-Sorrento-Naples mail-boat was about to enter the Bay of Naples I saw the imposing masses of the *Littorio* and of the *Vittorio Veneto*, our giant warships which had recently been built, and were weighing anchor just at that moment. A slight haze mantled the piers of the harbours, traversed only by streaks of black smoke rising from the dock-yards. The bay, the most beautiful in the world, was one great phosphorescent expanse. On the Beverello mole the usual crowd of lazy porters and ragged boys greeted our arrival with a concert of cheers and shouts. We were in the hub of the deafening din of things that are ancient and yet ever new and living, among trams thirty years old, making a discordant din, their worn-out metals clanking ear-splittingly, while taxis darted among them, swaying from side to side on the bumpy pavement as they forged ahead through the restless, shouting, gabbling crowd, with its men and women nodding their heads, waving their hands, shrugging their shoulders and calling out to their passing friends. It was the eternal, unchanging Naples—Naples with its innate courtesy, its impulsiveness, its music, its generosity and its misery—a misery sometimes very malodorous; Naples the joyful, the arrogant, the romantic, the stoical, the turbulent. This people, I said to myself, could not realise what war would

mean—war which would spell destruction for them. If war should descend on this overcrowded city, perched on a point in the peninsula vastly exposed to danger, what would become of this seething multitude? Obligated to live huddled together like a herd of cattle sheltering from a rainstorm, in houses with walls of clay that seem in danger of collapsing when the mid-day gun is fired at Capodimonte, in sordid tottering tenements, in dark and filthy alleys with ponderous gateways opening on to human hives full of rags, sobbings and songs, there men and women have existed for centuries cramped by toil and fatalism. Go in quest of the so-called amenities of Naples and picture to yourself what would happen if that city should be bombed. Borgo Loreto, Rione Garibaldi, Rione Vicaria, San Giovanni and Teduccio—how would they stand up to a blitzkrieg? For centuries the people of Naples have lived amid squalor, and yet they never complain, neither do they feel inspired to hope for any improvement in their lot, because it would be like waiting for the meeting of Mars with the earth in the rotation of the stars and the planets. Luxurious Fascist headquarters have been built there, huge marble public buildings—all brand new and “practical”, to use their own definition of a style alleged to date back to A.D. 900, but there are no houses for the people, and the Fascists have not helped them to rouse themselves from their apathy. Incidentally, who then could imagine that my brooding about the effects of war on Naples was destined to be actually prophetic?

In order to return to Berlin from Naples you have to pass through Rome. I must say that I never like staying at Rome, for it is one of those cities that have arrived at such a peak of saturation, and over which Fascism has spread such a false atmosphere of formalism, that one prefers to steer clear of the place. In the course of a very few years, with all these ministries, centres of Confederations, public institutes, quarters for administrative councils and newspaper offices, Rome underwent a phenomenal increase in population, rising from one million to about two and a half millions. There was always a feeling, however, that this was all merely provisional and largely lacking in solidity. The official summoned

to the capital to take up a new post in a newly-created office, knew beforehand that his job would not last long, for in Fascism the situation is constantly changing. Men were transferred from one department to another, and ministers came and went, followed in their pilgrimages by their own cliques of favourites and toadies. Careerists who came from the provinces to make good in Rome, and feeling uncertain about the future, gathered around them backers and favourites. They worked hard to attain a key position, with possibilities of bettering themselves and piling up their savings. Rome had become just a bazaar of jobs, wire-pullings and vanities. The winged figure rising from the roof of the Palace of Justice, a symbol of dignity, righteousness and labour, wore an expression of gloom when she looked down on this feverish display of pomp and luxury, on all this negation of the consciousness of responsibilities and of genuine collective inspiration. One heard on the lips of the Fascists nothing but commonplaces and pompous phrases, as though each one of them had been taught a formal political catechism with a special terminology that was compulsory.

Seventy per cent of the jobs in the ministries were completely superfluous. The heads of these departments turned up at their offices a few hours before noon, and put in an appearance again later on in the evening a little before closing time, when secretaries placed documents before them for signature. But the elegant wives of these hierarchs of the ministries were waiting outside in the street in their streamlined cars, for their husbands to take them to dine in expensive fashionable restaurants, and afterwards to the baccarat tables, where they played for high stakes, or to theatrical and film premières. There were also the literary taverns where the political man and his wife had to put in an appearance now and then to keep up a certain tone. In these taverns there was a mixed grill of celebrities and semi-celebrities, the serious writer, the comic writer, the diffident beginner, the politician and his wife, the artist most in vogue, the artist's wife, the artist's lover, the enigmatical being with a foreign accent, the race-course *habitué*, the inevitable friend, and the near or

distant relative of Ciano. "Cianismo" was an infection which had affected a great many.

In the hotel I ran into a woman of Russian birth named Clarissa, whom I had formerly known in Berlin, the divorced wife of a certain film-producer. We had lunch in the bar of the Excelsior. At a prearranged moment, she got the telephone receiver passed on to her from its table, and in my presence and that of all the guests, started in atrocious Italian what seemed an endless and extremely fatuous conversation with some man or woman whom I did not know. When she gathered that we had had quite enough of it, she put down the receiver, and "by the way" opened her purse, and handed me with a great air of mystery, a telegram which she had received. To be exact, she only showed me the signature, "Galcazzo Ciano," but the coquettish expression that accompanied the gesture, told me the rest. "He is expecting me, you know. I cannot keep him waiting long," she confided to me during dessert, and then departed in great haste. But I feel certain that she showed that telegram to everyone of her acquaintance.

Mussolini, too, had a kept mistress and the whole capital was talking about it. In addition to being pretty, Claretta Petacci was apparently a lady of boundless energy and ability. Under her influence the Duce somewhat modified his Spartan way of living. There were people who asserted that they had seen him frequently at a certain hour when, after leaving the Villa Torlonia, his chin bent over the handlebars of his motor-cycle he flew to some rendezvous where his meetings with Claretta took place. Her sister got an opening with a film company under the stage name of Miriam di San Servolo. Her father wrote articles on the practice of medicine every week in the *Messaggero*.

When I was received at the Ministry of Popular Culture by Luciano, who was head of that department, and likewise a "Cianist", I could not refrain from asking him what was the meaning of my first recall from Berlin at the instigation of the German Government, and the subsequent cancelling of that recall. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Go and ask Attolico. He is the only one who can possibly know anything

about it. Here, I can swear to you, not even the Duce is aware of the reasons put forward by the German Government when they asked for your recall from Berlin." There was nothing astonishing in this reply. Everything was on those lines. Berlin dictated, and Rome carried out Berlin's dictates, without asking for any explanations. The ministry that dealt with such matters did not know the reason for an Italian journalist losing favour with the German authorities, and did not take the trouble to enquire.

In the Fascist capital of course they were unaware of the fact that a war was at their very doors. I do not hesitate to assert that Mussolini's Rome, owing to the faithlessness of diplomats and the ignorance of rulers, was always the last to learn of the changes that had taken place, from the establishment of the Axis to the downfall of that régime. Few Italian diplomats had the courage to state what they did know, and no member of the Government or of the Party wanted to remove his rose-coloured spectacles from his eyes in order to look realities in the face. I don't know what was the use of our press reports beyond drawing the attention of the Government in office to a sense of realities. Many of them were censored, but portions of them were published, perhaps merely as curiosities or for the recording of contemporary events. But with regard to the serious threats made by Germany to Poland, and to Poland's firm determination to defend herself; in other words, with regard to the explosion that was so imminent nobody in Rome knew anything or even wished to discuss the subject. All they knew was that everything Berlin did was necessarily right. This blind confidence of Roman officialdom in Hitler's policy had assumed such proportions that the Germans themselves were amazed at it and tried to take every possible advantage of it.

An incident occurred which to many will appear incredible. An official from Goebbels's department went to Rome to make a proposal to the Duce in accordance with which budding Fascist journalists were to be sent to Germany, where the German Ministry of Propaganda would take charge of them. These youths would get a professional training in the Reich.

and have facilities for studying the problems of German life and of National Socialism with a view to their becoming an "aristocracy" of the Italian Press. Goebbels guaranteed every material assistance to these budding journalists, and even offered to remunerate them with salaries equivalent to those received by Nazi journalists. Had it not been for this last clause, the humiliating character of which did not elude the comprehension even of the most callow of Italians, I believe that Mussolini would have given his consent to the proposal. Instead, a compromise was reached, and actually only a small group of cub-reporters, who were "free from prejudices", set out for Germany to bring joy to Herr Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, who was dreaming of one school of journalism, and one press covering the whole Continent from the Baltic to Sicily.

In Berlin Attolico tried to explain to me the measures that had been adopted against me and the reason for their subsequent withdrawal. I had made myself obnoxious to two German Ministries, the Ministry of Propaganda and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—especially to the latter—because I held views that were notoriously hostile to Nazism. It was Schmidt, head of the Foreign Press Office, who had demanded my recall, as he had noticed my indifference to his lectures in the afternoon sessions of the Press Conference. My articles, he said, reeked of cunningly veiled rancour. Furthermore, some statements of mine, statements that were imprudent, had been reported to the Wilhelmstrasse. The request for my recall had been countermanded only provisionally, because I was president of the Association of the Foreign Press, and because it would not be pleasing to Nazi officialdom if, with my departure, the post of president should be assumed by the vice-president, Count Dembinsky, who belonged to the official Polish agency. Now the whole thing dawned on me. The Government of Berlin, which was on the point of making an attack on Poland, would have found itself in an awkward position with an organisation of the international press in Berlin actually placed under the control of a Polish journalist, and, an energetic and brilliant journalist such as Dembinsky.

After all, I represented in their eyes "das kleinste Uebel", and I would have to deal personally with an embarrassing situation.

I asked myself who could have told Schmidt about my views on Hitler and Germany. Our Association could not be called a perfect blend of kindred and congenial souls. First of all there were my Italian colleagues, some of whom were fawningly subservient fellows of the type of Schmidt and Boemer, and I even suspected that one of them was paid by the German Government to spy on us. Among the others there were three or four of dubious nationality and origin, who struck me as being on the most cordial terms with the officials of the Ministry of Propaganda and of Nazism. For instance, there was a half-German named Lochner about whom I had frequently warned my friend and colleague, because he was too friendly with Schmidt and Braun von Stumm.

Under these conditions I decided to send in my resignation at the first meeting of the Association, and in the meantime to take no part in its proceedings. Then matters swiftly came to a head. Hitler showed his determination to get Dantzig back and link up Germany and East Prussia, which had been separated by the Polish corridor. The Government of Warsaw mobilised and began to take military precautions, while Beck in London asked for an Anglo-Polish pact of mutual assistance. Poland was absolutely convinced that not only could she withstand Germany, but that she would emerge victorious from war if it had to come. It is incomprehensible how the rulers of Poland could have been the victims of such blindness. In Warsaw they spoke quite openly of the possibility of the Polish cavalry parading victoriously at no far distant date under the Brandenburg Gate. The Polish general staff maintained that the German armaments did not by a long way come up to the impression generally held about them. "You should see our cavalry!" was the proud comment made to me by an official who went as a courier from the office of the Polish military attaché. Yet Lipski, the Ambassador, struck me as an intelligent man who was in a position that should have enabled him to get precise information. For a long time

he had been a regular guest of Goebbels, and Lipski invariably turned up at every Nazi demonstration.

There is a psychological preliminary to the genesis of all wars. Perhaps Hitler imagined that he could overcome with mere threats the proud defiance with which Warsaw countered his challenge. Warsaw based its plans on the belief that Hitler was bluffing. Great Britain and France hoped that, should war break out, Poland would be able to hold out for six months at least. All Europe was convinced that it was facing one of the periodical storms which Hitler had by that time got into the habit of letting loose, without necessarily making an open declaration of war.

I noticed that during this period it was only the capitals of the little states, which looked on, trembling with terror like babes witnessing the quarrellings of their elders, that were able to gauge the actual barometrical pressure of the international situation. In Belgrade, Bucharest, Athens, Brussels, and the Hague nothing that happened or was imminent escaped the notice of the authorities. The newspapers of these countries registered the process of congestion that was developing in the veins of sick Europe. At length the moment came when they all saw that there was no way out of the impasse, and that the inevitable was on the point of coming true.

They telephoned to me from Milan to start at once for Salzburg. Apart from me only one other Italian colleague received a similar order, but he was unlucky, for when he reached Tempelhof the Munich plane had already gone. On the journey to Munich I was accompanied by our consul-general, Pittalis, who was going to Salzburg for the meeting between Ciano and Ribbentrop. This meeting, on the eve of a war that was now considered in all quarters to be inevitable, aroused our curiosity. We landed at the Oesterreicher Hof. Ciano had not turned up so far, but Ribbentrop had gone to the station to welcome him as usual. When Ciano entered the foyer of the hotel, accompanied by two officials from his department, Attolico and Magistrati, and last, but not least, by Ansaldo, his friend and echo, I noticed that he looked rather gloomy. Ciano and Ribbentrop immediately began a

conference, first by themselves alone, and later on with Attolico. Attolico's stay was short, however, and presently he dashed breathlessly downstairs and gave some orders to Magistrati. The hotel switchboard operator got instructions to keep the line with Rome open day and night.

In the foyer on the ground floor of the hotel people were constantly coming and going. Among them I recognised the singer, Baron Ruffin, who told me that the theatrical season was about to begin at Salzburg. The baron, whom I had not seen since I was in Capri, having told me an idiotic story about an Italian operatic singer who had got involved in a dramatic love affair in Switzerland, switched off suddenly into the question that was just then on everybody's lips, "Will there be war?" He was worried about the script of a libretto he was writing for the coming spring opera season at the Scala, in Milan. The musical composer Serafini and his daughter and her fiancé were also there.

I took Ansaldo aside and began to review recent events with him. He was impatient to hear how matters stood in Berlin in the conflict with Poland, while I was equally anxious to know what business had brought Ciano at that moment so unexpectedly to Salzburg.

"Oh, you know," he replied, "at Rome they are just beginning to realise that things are becoming very serious. Mussolini was at Forlì when he received a communication that war is considered in London to be inevitable. Henderson, it seems, has been instructed to tell Hitler that England considers it her duty to honour her pledges to Poland. Everything will go on smoothly enough until the territories are actually annexed, but should this lead to a clash of arms, the situation will change."

"Do you believe that we shall be involved in the war too?"

"That idea must be absolutely ruled out. Get involved in the war—with what? With guns that are fit only for a museum?"

"So it would seem that Ciano has come just to state that Italy is in no position to give help to Germany. Is that true?"

"Well, what other business brought him here, do you

think? He and I talked about it at great length in the train on our way here. But could not this fellow Hitler be satisfied for the present with what he has seized already?"

I breathed freely. Italy would not go to war. Ansaldo! If only you knew the joy you gave me at that moment in Salzburg when you told me the splendid news in advance. I had feared that the pact between Rome and Berlin would have forced us to commit an act of folly. God be praised, we had not gone headlong into utter ruin! I shouted to Baron Ruffin, who approached in quest of news, "Ruffin, the opera season will start all right this spring in the Scala Theatre. Don't have any fear on that score. We shall also go to Capri!"

The talks between the two ministers of foreign affairs continued until dark. It was stated afterwards that Ciano went on to Obersalzberg to confer with the Fuehrer. That evening, however, the Fascist minister had a long telephonic conversation with the Duce. I learned later on by reading a report of the proceedings, what transpired between them. The conversation began with these words something like this, "It is impossible to discuss matters with this fellow Ribbentrop!"

Ciano had opened the conversation by informing the German minister, in Mussolini's name, that the Italian Government were not contemplating leading their country into war, on account of its inadequate military preparation. The Italian Government asked whether it was absolutely indispensable and inevitable for Germany to start a war just at that moment. Later on, perhaps within the next three years, but certainly not before 1942, Italy would be in a position to carry out her pledges as an ally, and would take her place at the side of the Reich. On the other hand, the Italian Government could not conceal its own uneasiness about the risk that the war, which in this instance would have been started by Germany, might prove a long one, and might spread at an alarming rate owing to the attitude of the Western Powers who had made up their minds to support Poland. Had the German Government taken those eventualities into their calculations? What were the precautions taken by them?

The story of this meeting, over which a veil of secrecy has to a very large extent been cast, indicates that Ribbentrop just shrugged his shoulders, and looking with a semi-sneering expression at Ciano, exclaimed that the Berlin Government were only too well aware of the military unpreparedness of Italy. The German Government in coming to its decision with regard to the Polish crisis, had not banked for even one minute on Italian support of Germany in the action which had been organised by her to force Poland to yield to the German claims. The war with Poland, Ribbentrop added, would be finished in a very few weeks. The Fuehrer had adopted all the measures that were necessary for the success of the campaign and—(here Ribbentrop struck a haughty attitude as he indulged in pompous language which did not admit of a reply) "When the Fuehrer declares a war, that war can only end in a victory for him." As for the rest, Ribbentrop hailed the opportunity of informing the representative of the Fascist Government that actually at that moment the negotiations had been completed for the conclusion of a pact with Russia which would be signed on the following day. This pact stipulated for a mutual close co-operation between Berlin and Moscow for the solution of Oriental problems.

Ciano asked whether there was not a risk that the United States, following the example of Great Britain and France, would assume a hostile attitude towards the action of Germany. Waving his hand with a semi-circular sweep towards the horizon, Ribbentrop summarised the probable attitude of the various states. Germany's protection against France was guaranteed by her Westwall. She had nothing to fear from England, because England was unprepared. And again, the campaign against Poland would be a very short one. In Ankara Von Papen had ensured that the Turkish Government would remain neutral. There was absolutely no doubt about the neutrality of all the Balkan and Danubian states. With regard to America, the German Government had taken measures through the medium of its representative in Washington and in other American capitals for the distribution of millions of copies of the latest speeches of the Fuehrer, the

reading of which could not fail to convince all the people of America that Germany was going to war merely for the defence of her own rights. Information which had recently come from New York had completely reassured the German Government that their propaganda had done the trick. The American Government now recognised Hitler's sacrosanct rights, and regarded with sympathy Germany's effort to regain her rights. North American isolationist opinion had developed at an astonishing momentum, and Roosevelt himself was, so to speak, isolated.

The conversation between Ciano and Ribbentrop next turned to technical details, and Ciano asked how many submarines Germany possessed. Ribbentrop regretted that he could not give him an exhaustive reply just then. Ciano afterwards told Ansaldo that the great sage, Ribbentrop, had done nothing but declaim all through the conversation, showing that he was puffed up with pride over the success achieved by Germany during the last two years, and over the prospect of the future successes which he claimed, were bound to come. The Italian minister's remarks had left this enthusiastic optimism of Hitler's representative completely unshaken. At one point in the conversation, owing to a word that had been misunderstood, both men frowned and the conference was almost in danger of developing into a stormy interlude. Ciano added that for this reason he felt that it was necessary, and that it was, moreover, his duty to inform the Duce at once about the futility of the talk he had just had with Ribbentrop. In consequence the Duce ordered him to see Hitler personally, and to repeat to him the communication about the non-intervention of Italy.

These last days in August, prior to the explosion, have left an indelible impression on my memory. The frequent conversations which the British and French ambassadors had with the Fuehrer, Henderson's journeys to and fro between Berlin and London, the echoes of the Anglo-Polish meetings in the British capital, the lightning departure of Lipski and his withdrawal into complete isolation in his embassy, his refusal to see press representatives, the telephone conversa-

tions between Mussolini and Ciano, and between Attolico and Ciano, the agitation in the Nazi Press which had reached its climax, the proclamations of Grciser, President of the Senate and of Forster, gauleiter at Dantzig, in a word, the crescendo of the fever before the irreparable had occurred—the crescendo of hatred.

On August 26 the German Government announced the rationing of food in the country, a symptom which in itself was quite sufficient to alarm people's minds. In Berlin life ran its normal course—"Business as usual". It looked as though the people did not realise the seriousness of the implications of what was going on. The war was not popular. Hitler was not as popular as some people imagined. There was something of a feeling of resignation among the German people which was translated into these words, "He wishes it. It will be all right." The average German citizen felt that the bow had been stretched too taut. Europe could not continue looking on at the acts of rapine which Hitler kept carrying on in the name of Germany. Sometimes his unexpected coups had brought the country to the very verge of war. The people of Germany were terrified at the thought of finding themselves surrounded by a wall of hatred, in a Europe composed of states that had been overrun and insulted. They were not wrong, for I believe that the English began to hate Germany in these days. The flood of dislike rose higher and higher, pouring in from all sides until it stifled the voice of the reasonable German who, as he read the papers in the evening and listened to the radio with Fritzsche's comments, saw with terror that Hitler's mental aberration was triumphing.

They had started calling up large numbers of men. One of my dearest friends found, on the evening of August 27, a paper awaiting him at home, ordering him to present himself on the following morning at a barracks in Potsdam. He was not even able to get in touch with his wife, who was in the country with her parents. The German women who went through the experience of those days in such an atmosphere got a foretaste of the anguish of the years to come.

The Reichstag was summoned, and Hitler announced that

"the situation was serious". These words had an ominous ring, for ever since the last war, the Germans knew that the tag, "the situation is serious" implies the imminence of terrible happenings. A War Cabinet was formed, but no order for mobilisation was issued, for Germany had already secretly mobilised. A certain number of regiments were transferred from one depot to another. Divisions in full battle equipment began moving in a continuous stream through Berlin. The stations were already swarming with men in uniform, and among them there were a great many hospital nurses carrying their travelling bags.

I decided upon two things; firstly, to look for a new and smaller house instead of the large one in which until then I had lived with my family, whom I could not bring to Berlin again; secondly, to increase the staff of the Stefani Agency by the appointment of a Sicilian, named Angelo Vecchio Verderame. The Agency agreed to the new appointment, but to justify it I had to give a long explanation on the phone, for apparently they were under the illusion at Rome that the war could be avoided at the very last moment. I remember the impression produced on me when I saw for the first time those ration cards which a member of our commercial staff distributed to us—square pieces of card in red, violet and yellow colours on which from that day the existence of each individual one of us depended. I handed my cards to the cook, I complied with Verderame's request for permission to put up in my house during those days of tension and toil. At heart I felt glad, as I found it a help to have a colleague beside me, in immediate touch with me, especially for night work.

I noticed that Attolico had dropped his normal tone of arrogant assurance, and showed symptoms of preoccupation. From a hint dropped by Magistrati I gleaned that the Ambassador had begun to weigh up recent political developments with a certain amount of seriousness. He had not imagined that the crisis would have reached such a peak. His reports to Rome had been rather optimistic, even in regard to the Polish question. Hitler's hesitation had seemed to him an

indication that the Wilhelmstrasse was taking into consideration the risks which Germany would run by encountering the hostility of the whole world on account of her attack on Poland. After Salzburg, Attolico had no longer any chance of meeting Ribbentrop, who was always engaged, and even Weiszaecker did not appear to have much time to give to the Italian Ambassador. A very definite lack of interest in Italy prevailed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Braun von Stumm was the only one who continued to visit Attolico and give him some information.

A few of us had met in the Foreign Press Club, at the corner of the Leipzigerstrasse, on the evening of August 28 to discuss events. Schneider, the president of the club, the Chief of the Berlin office of the *National Zeitung*, who usually was somewhat loquacious and even generous in volunteering "likely" bits of news, adopted a stubborn and unwonted silence that evening. Other members present included Oechsner of the United Press, Shanko of the Associated Press, Holburn of *The Times*, Jouve of the Havas Agency, Hus of the *Ins*, and Senatra of the *Messagero*, whose personal taste made him prefer music to politics as a theme for discussion. The conversation turned on the noble letter sent by Daladier to Hitler entreating him not to bring about the catastrophe of a war in which France would be forced to take part on Poland's side. Daladier, the old soldier of the 1914-18 campaign, recalled to the old soldier Hitler the horrors of the last war. What balm to the heart were these only-too-rarely heard counsels of moderation in that atmosphere of tension! Our German colleagues, among whom was Schneider, listened attentively to what we said without making even a single comment. I sensed in their silence a hint of bitter jealousy and hatred. It is not possible that in their hearts they did not think as we did exactly—they who could not express their opinion. At heart, I kept repeating to myself, they have heard just as we have, what people are saying in the city, and like all the people they are terrified at the mere thought that there may be a reversion to the conditions of twenty-five years ago, when Germany found herself alone against the whole world.

In the club our conversation next turned to the subject of colleagues who were preparing to pack their belongings and leave Germany. The families of some French and English diplomats had already gone. Panton of the *Daily Express* said, "No, I won't go. You will see in the end, as on the other occasions, that everything will be settled." Panton had bought a little villa on the Italian Riviera four months previously. That little villa has never seen its owner for the last four years, as he is a prisoner in a German concentration camp in Denmark.

On the morning of August 29 news came that the Polish cabinet had ordered a general mobilisation. Poland was not losing time. At that moment Polish divisions were guarding the frontier and in the aerodromes along the Corridor the Air Forces of Smigly Rydz had planes ready to dart into the Prussian sky. As for the Germans, nobody could calculate even approximately the enormous scope of their preparations for the fray. An acquaintance of mine, who was returning from Koenigsberg, assured me that the entire territory of Silesia was occupied by troops, and that also in East Prussia military preparations had been undertaken on a large scale.

But the trains continued to run right up to the last day, and there was no check on civilians travelling. Not until the precise moment of the explosion was the transport system across the Corridor suspended. The ultimate phase of the vigil was suggestive of the oxygen that is given to the dying before they draw their last breath. Hitler wired his final warning to Warsaw on the morning of August 30. The Polish Government was invited to send to Berlin, during the course of the next twenty-four hours, a representative to discuss the position. The Polish Government turned a deaf ear. The mutual assistance pact with Great Britain and France had encouraged Warsaw to stiffen its attitude of resistance.

In the Wilhelmstrasse all the windows were a blaze of light on the last and decisive night. In my car I passed twice in front of it with a presentiment of disaster. Past experience

had taught me that Hitler habitually starts all his most important and serious undertakings on what seem premeditated dates, such as the beginning or the end of the month or on a Sunday morning. At six o'clock that night, in fact, the last night of an era of peace which had hardly lasted for four lustrums the German radio announced the outbreak of war.

Chapter VI

TOWARDS THE ADVENTURE

ALL wars are different from one another, but I believe that no war recorded in history up to the present day can be compared with the present one. The man who wanted it at all costs, and in opposition to every argument of logic and reason, under the conviction that it would lead to such an increase in his power that the mere mention of the names of Hitler and Germany would inspire respect and fear everywhere, was obliged to change his mind. His calculations all miscarried from first to the last. He was certain, first of all, that he could finish the war with a lightning stroke in Poland, which would not give time to the Democratic Powers to intervene, nor even to think of any counter-measures that could stay his hand. When Polish resistance was ended, in twenty-one days, he thought that he could call off the war, and that it would be possible to enter on a new era of reconstruction without any hindrance. Instead of this the conflict went on. In the second place, Hitler trusted to the "peace offensive" which he proposed to open, to persuade the great Democratic Powers that it would be futile to protract hostilities, seeing that Germany was strong and capable of withstanding even the most formidable coalition. Contrary to his calculations, the anti-German naval blockade which was organised by Great Britain began to take an ever-increasing effect, and he was obliged to end the stalemate and to resume the battle.

The occupation of Denmark was merely a one-day affair, but that of Norway gave the Germans a pretty tough job. Yet it was in the West that Hitler's plans were most astray, though it was to his advantage. He looked forward to a long campaign, and, instead, was victorious after a struggle finished in record time. But even then, when the whole world, bewildered by what had happened, held its breath, the war was not over. The two great Anglo-Saxon powers on either side of the

Atlantic, saw that they would have to adopt the most extreme measures with a pirate of the Hitler type. The war once more registered a lull. Great Britain was marshalling her forces to win the last round, and America was preparing to take an active part in the conflict. At that period Berlin was convinced that the terror which the Stukas would cause in the British Islands would prevail on its hated adversary to accept favourable terms. But here again Hitler miscalculated, for the Battle of Britain, which was an entirely aerial campaign, had the miraculous effect of galvanising into more stubborn resistance the people of these islands, while it aroused throughout the whole world a greater flood of hatred against Germany. Neither did her intervention in Greece by the side of Italy, who had embarked on a perilous adventure, enhance the reputation for invincibility which the Germans had endeavoured to foster with regard to their military power. In Yugoslavia Hitler expected to find a stouter resistance, but it was merely a matter of a few days to reduce that nation to impotence. In Libya, where Rommel, invested with an aureole of glory that outshone that of the Byzantine general Belisarius, held sway, Hitler knew for the first time the bitterness of defeat and retreat. When the war spread to the Eastern front against Russia he was fully convinced that he was reaching the peak of his military success by finishing a Cyclopean campaign in the space of six weeks at most. But this campaign dragged on for years, and as I write, the German armies are retreating in panic. Not one of his forecasts has proved correct; apart from what happened in Poland, everything has gone wide of the mark, compelling him to revise his tactical plans again and again.

The war started at a frenzied lightning tempo, followed by a couple of more or less long lulls, until it finally evolved into one of those struggles in which both sides had alternate successes and set-backs. But Germany, whose plan was to crush her enemies one after another, now sees herself surrounded on all sides, and not only are those nations attacking her whom she deemed innocuous on account of their isolation and their remoteness, but even those states which Hitler fancied that

he had completely knocked out, have risen up again after their martyrdom. History is avenging itself on Hitler and is smashing and crushing those few supports which he thought he possessed. Italy is now lost as an ally, Finland was glad to have peace again, and Hungary and Rumania, the latter being the weaker of the two, only waited for the opportunity to escape from the net in which they are trapped. The whole fabric is crumbling over the head of the man who in his audacity and effrontery imagined that he could dominate Europe. The only thing he could hope for was that having swept sufficiently forward into the territory of his foes, the war might run its course still beyond the frontiers of Germany. But the ring begins to encircle him more and more. Germany is no longer tabu as it was a year ago. If Hitler should survey the happenings from the first of September, 1939, to the present day he ought to give up all hope, for things are progressively going from bad to worse. The calendar of the war shows a disastrous outlook for Germany. It is no longer a question as to how Germany will be able to save herself, but rather how much more pressure will be needed for her overthrow and punishment. This is the fruit of the madness of one man, and this is the tragic situation into which he has dragged his people, who had not adopted measures while there was time to obtain forgiveness for all their crimes of the last war.

Memory recalls those early months of the war, from September, 1939, to June, 1940, as though they belonged to an era of the dim, remote past. The first black-out was a shock to the nerves and the beginning of a terrible depression of the spirit. On moonlit nights Berlin, no longer illuminated by electricity, was a spectral and melancholy sight. Air-raid warnings followed one another beneath the rays of the searchlights that blended with the glint of the stars, and in the cellar-shelters people with livid faces, and all strangers to one another, exchanged silent glances. In those shelters I found myself in the company of many people whom I did not know and at whom through force of habit, I looked without seeing them. When a raid was imminent, the first hint of it was given by

the Deutschlandsender, the long-wave radio of the principal station in Berlin, which forthwith ceased to transmit. Everybody knew then that the moment had come for seeking shelter in the cellars.

"The enemy is listening in", proclaimed the posters in the streets, notices in the newspaper columns and cinema screens. "The enemy is listening. Be guarded in your speech." But the German people could not refrain from talking about a war they could not comprehend, and exchanged in hushed tones fragments of the latest news in the always-crowded cafés and restaurants. Owing to the darkness the cafés and the cinemas were the only places to which one could go in the evenings. But the morale of the people in those first weeks and months was pretty good. The news from Poland was a stimulus. Within the space of eight days Cracow had fallen, and an ultimatum had been given to the defenders of Warsaw. Everybody was talking about the prowess of General von Reichenau, who, at the head of his forces, had swum a river in pursuit of the Polish Army. Reichenau was one of those generals who recall pictures of the prairie pioneers, with bronzed complexions, features moulded out of gnarled oak—fellows as fleet as the storm and as dashing as the hurricane.

When the war was over in Poland people talked a lot about another of Germany's most famous and most popular soldiers, General von Fritsch, whom Hitler had begun to detest as far back as the time of the occupation of Austria. One day it was announced in a communiqué that von Fritsch had been killed during a front-line inspection. The cause of the mysterious death of this German general will come to light only after the war; if what I heard was true he had been wounded, but refused all medical aid, as he preferred to die on the battlefield. In Berlin people said that he had been murdered by the S.S.

The intervention of Russia was an incident which the German people could never grasp. On September 17 the Russian cavalry swept over the territory of Vollandia to finish off Poland more quickly. This was the process of putting the Russo-German Pact into operation. In Berlin people were

wondering whether Russia would show her gratitude by helping Germany to fight the naval blockade with grain and raw materials.

A flight which, on instructions from headquarters, I made to Warsaw when it was in the grip of fire gave me a terrible revelation of the sufferings of the first city to be martyred during the course of this war. Hitler hurled himself on Warsaw with the savagery of an assassin, only because it had resisted him heroically, and because, in their territories which had been over-run, the Poles replied to the German invaders by the achievements of their *francs-tireurs*.

Every time my dearest friend Kurt B, left us to return to his regiment after our brief meetings I had to go to the Charlottenburg station to see him off. His face had become drawn and haggard with anguish at the thought of having to leave. I saw once more the endless line of trains, crowded with soldiers on furlough, leaving one after another as though they comprised an endless convoy disappearing into the night. I saw once more all the confusion of those waitings on the platform among crowds of unrecognisable shadowy beings, chattering in dull guttural tones beneath the faint blue light of a lantern, the women waving good-bye, and the conductors looking exasperated and impatient. I saw once more the silhouette of the station itself, looking like a huge cavernous eye shining in the body of the murky night.

"Good-bye, Kurt. Keep up your heart. Come back at Christmas. Perhaps it will be all over by then."

He murmured something I could not catch in reply and shrugged his shoulders. He suffered intensely from the mere fact that he had to wear a uniform and depart into the unknown as though he were a deported convict in the company of a thousand others like him. A month later Rifleman B was drafted with his battalion to the Westwall.

A strange situation had developed at the Westwall. Two hostile armies faced each other, one behind the Maginot Line, the other behind the Siegfried Line, without either of them taking the initiative. For months on end nothing occurred beyond occasional artillery duels and a few nocturnal infantry

raids for reconnaissance purposes. The Germans had attached notices to the barbed wire running thus, "We have no intention of firing, provided that you don't fire." One day Lieutenant Paul Deschanel, son of the ex-president of the French Republic, was killed in the German lines on the southern sector of the Westwall, facing the Saar, and the German general in command gave him a military funeral with all the honours of war.

When Christmas came, with thousands of parcels for the soldiers and greetings from the home front, the tiny lights of the Christmas trees were seen aglow along the ramparts of the Westwall, and gramophone strains of hymns and carols drifted towards the Allied lines. On that night it was said, with what truth I know not, that no sentry fired a shot, but instead, there was a mutual fraternal exchange of gifts between German, French and British soldiers.

I was told about these Christmas scenes on my return from Capri where I went to spend the festive season with my family. The visit to Italy was a very short one, but long enough for me to realise that in my country the people always followed the course of the war with something of a remote and detached interest. Italy was benefiting by her neutrality by carrying on a roaring trade with the belligerent nations, and her steamers plied to and fro with heavy cargoes for European, Asiatic and American ports. A wave of optimism and prosperity swept the country. Christmas passed without a trace of worry over international affairs. Extravagance and luxury continued to be the main characteristics of life among the wealthy. After the visit paid by Ciano to Berlin, early in October, when the campaign in Poland was over, Roman circles, hitherto objective observers of the happenings to the north of our frontiers, had begun again to take an interest in politics. Ciano had gathered the impression from the German capital that the Nazi Government would be glad to extricate itself from the problem of a protracted conflict, and that they would welcome any favourable opportunity for making peace with the Western Powers. As a neutral Italy would have been able to offer her services as mediator. The speech delivered

by the Fuehrer at Warsaw, on October 5, confirmed this impression. Mussolini tried to play the role of peace-maker, but the replies he received from the representatives of Great Britain and France left him no grounds for hoping for any success. Germany had gone too far. To obtain peace she would have to restore everything she had stolen from Poland. It is hardly likely that Mussolini could have been so naive as to hope for any successful outcome to his mediation; he merely felt that this service was due by him to his friend Hitler.

During that period Ciano began to win for himself the reputation of being an enemy of Germany and of Nazism. The "Cianists" circulated opinions expressed by the young Minister which tended to show that he had completely repented. They said that stormy scenes frequently occurred between Mussolini and his son-in-law with regard to the expediency of continuing to adhere to the policy of the Axis. My own personal opinion is that there was a great deal of exaggeration in those rumours. It would have been too much, even for Ciano, to show any inclination to a change of attitude so suddenly after his display of enthusiasm in seeking a pact between Rome and Berlin. His toadies adopted this attitude for the purely propagandist motive of "creating an atmosphere", and thus securing an honourable retreat, if need be, for their powerful protector.

To me the behaviour of Ciano and of the Cianists was nauseating. To establish the Axis they had created such a reign of terror in Italy that whoever ventured to raise any objections was persecuted, maltreated and deprived of his means of livelihood; now suddenly the reverse of the medallion was shown, and little Mussolini Number Two played at being anti-German. He had returned from his last trip to Germany with feelings of special dislike for Ribbentrop. It was obvious that the two ministers of foreign affairs were mutually uncongenial. Ribbentrop had assumed an attitude of extraordinary arrogance, based on the military successes of Germany. Ciano frequently complained about it to Mussolini, and thenceforth the meetings between the two ministers of foreign affairs were

strictly formal, for the purpose of putting their respective signatures to agreements already previously drawn up. They had no more heart to heart talks.

When I returned from Italy I found Berlin deeply mantled in snow, and the temperature fallen to twenty degrees below zero. It was the first winter in the trenches for the soldiers, and Hitler had not calculated on its severity. Transport troubles made coal supplies for the capital difficult, and for fully three months the city was bereft of any means of heating. In the shops attendants wore overcoats and caps all day long. Business men and clerks only went to their offices in the morning to open letters and look after very urgent business. Rationing became absolutely rigid. All trading in petrol was stopped, but we journalists were able to use our cars with a limited supply of petrol. A few days after my arrival I had the misfortune to knock down a drunken man with my car at a crossing which was absolutely pitch-black. He was very slightly injured, but I had to spend a whole night on the go between the nearest first-aid post and the police station.

Now that the curtain had fallen on the Polish drama, statistics of the devastation that had been wrought began to be available. Hitler had employed fully seventy divisions and a powerful air force to crush Poland. Warsaw was still burning, it was said. While the Fuehrer was speaking in Warsaw, on October 5, the flames were shooting aloft to the sky from the frightful conflagration. Poor Poland, who had thought that the annihilation of Germany would be as easy as cracking a nut! Sikorsky had gone to London, and Beck had fled to the south of the Balkans. A great many of my acquaintances had perished in the ruins of Warsaw, and many of my colleagues had died bravely for the defence of their country. But there were Germans too on the roll-call of death. When you opened the newspaper you found countless crosses on the last page. Column after column of these brief obituaries ran, "Died for the Fuehrer, for the people and for the nation"—a cemetery on a newspaper page. It was the only form of mourning that Hitler would permit. Mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts were forbidden to wear black.

I had definitely handed over the presidency of the Association to a Dutch colleague, and I made up my mind to cease attending the conferences held by Schmidt, which always struck me as carefully pre-arranged affairs. Invariably when Schmidt turned up, he started with the formal patter, "Gentlemen, I await your questions." He looked challengingly at the first speaker who ventured to break the silence with a question. It was often an idiotic one, and Schmidt replied as though he were reciting a lesson that he had committed to memory. No, such comic turns were not for me. In any case, I had never found that anything he said ever helped me in the slightest in my work.

After a while rumours of my imminent expulsion from Germany were being whispered around. Well, I was not at all astonished at this, and I would not be taken unawares. Attolico had told me that arrangements had been made for my provisional recall, arrangements that had never been cancelled. I told my colleague Verderame to return to his own house, as I was giving notice to my landlord in the Meranerstrasse. I had decided to take another house which was beautifully situated in the heart of the Grunewald, outside the city. It was my intention to be seen in the city as little as possible henceforth. Instead of the cook, whom I later found out to be a spy placed by the Gestapo inside my own four walls, I chose an old Viennese servant named Martin, whom I recall as a close student of time-tables, a pedant, a rather saucy fellow, and like his predecessor, a spy for the Gestapo. I learned later on, too, that my colleague and guest, Verderame, was in the habit of reporting all my statements, and even casual remarks, to the Wilhelmstrasse, exaggerating them in order to make me still more suspect. The Gestapo listened in to my telephone, and my mail was transferred for scrutiny from the ordinary censorship to that attached to the Ministry. However, despite all these annoyances my new abode in the Grunewald, facing the little artificial lake of Hundekehle, gave me some joy and comfort.

My head office wrenched me away from the idyllic peaceful

scene to which I had gladly retired, to make me visit the battle-fields of Norway, Belgium and France. The Oberkommando were not very keen on seeing representatives of the foreign press nosing about their front-lines. The *Popolo d'Italia* had frequently asked me to go to the actual battle-grounds to get realistic factual reports, but the German military authorities would not allow, even in exceptional circumstances, foreign journalists to mix with troops in the firing-line. They had organised the "propaganda companies" for the Home Press, consisting of poor devils who were more soldiers than journalists, who took up the typewriter and the machine-gun in turns, and of whom many were killed in this dual fulfilment of their tasks. The Ministry of Propaganda, however, sometimes succeeded in securing from the Oberkommando authorisation for the foreign press to visit positions in the rear of the battle-lines.

Our first visit was to Norway. We arrived at Oslo in two hours from Berlin, in one of the Fuehrer's planes. The German forces had opened the passage to the north in the direction of Trondheim, and it was a three days' journey between them and our convoy. The south of Norway was already in the full glory of springtime. I recollect gathering the first violets in front of Sigrid Undset's cottage at Lillehammer. The beautiful Norwegian roads were white ribbons winding through long stretches of pines and meadows of brilliant emerald green which merged into the bases of little hills and clefts, or amid deep valleys in which here and there cottages whiter than the road itself peeped. It was obvious that battle had been waged in the woods, as every eight or ten yards shell-holes yawned in the ground and we saw sturdy trees shattered by explosions. All the bridges had been blown up by the retreating Norwegians, and the Todt organisation was busy rebuilding them. The further north we went, the wilder was the landscape. They took us by car to a point beyond which all further travelling, except on foot, was impossible, from which a huge stone bridge reduced to a shapeless mass of rubble was visible. Even on this wrecked bridge the German engineers were feverishly engaged on the

task of reconstruction. The road leading to the bridge had been badly smashed up.

On a raised plateau we came in contact with some English and Norwegian prisoners. There was a Scottish lieutenant-colonel among them whom I shall never forget. The major in command of the Germans sent for him and began to question him in passable English. The lieutenant-colonel was tall and lank, but his figure was muscular and well-knit. He might be forty years old. He wore an immaculate uniform and was bare-headed. All through his interrogation he kept smoking his pipe, and there was an impish twinkle in his eyes.

The German officer asked a few questions of no great significance, after which he warned the prisoner that it was his duty to search him. The Englishman shrugged his shoulders with a resigned expression. He allowed the German to go through his pockets from which he extracted a bundle of letters. It was all just private correspondence. In one of the letters there was an allusion to a yacht which the Scottish officer had bought that summer to go cruising in the Mediterranean. The German major, after a brief spell of thinking, handed back the letters to the prisoner.

"Well, what will you do with me now?" asked the Scotsman with a cynical gleam in his eyes.

"You are our prisoner, you see. We shall take you to a concentration camp."

"I know that. But where?"

"It is not for me to decide that. But very probably it will be in Germany."

"For how long? You must have seen from my letters that I am banking on a cruise in the Mediterranean in my yacht."

"So sorry, old chap. But you won't be able to do it until the war is over."

The Scotsman retorted with a scornful glance, and shrugging his shoulders, strode off to mingle with the other prisoners.

Everybody is familiar with the story of the capture of Oslo, Narvik, and other Norwegian ports by the Germans. The invaders did not gain any great advantage by the occupation,

as I don't think that in any other country on which they had pounced did they meet with such sullen deep hatred, which was shown in a frigid and passive attitude, and systematic boycotting by the people. The Norwegians stood by, their hands in their pockets, icily indifferent apparently, but with an expression on their faces that spoke volumes of scorn as the Germans trooped through the streets of Oslo. If in General Falkenhain, who commanded the troops of occupation, they saw the soldier who with a ruthless hand had enforced the harsh code of the invader, in Teerboven they saw the civil commissar, the inhuman tyrant, the robber and the persecutor. The occupation forces had already started to move in; as they did so, a systematic plundering of Norway through the medium of heavy impositions, started. During the course of the first twenty-four hours the Germans tapped the chief arteries of Norwegian economic life, and that was even before Quisling had come out of his hole to facilitate the task of draining the nation's life blood.

What the Germans failed to do in this war was to justify, even in the slightest degree, their acts of aggression, by confining themselves to strictly indispensable military measures. If, for instance, when they occupied Czechoslovakia and Poland, they had taken no steps beyond ensuring their security in the military field, leaving local administrative bodies to carry on their normal tasks without disturbance, the furrows of hate which they have ploughed in the souls of the stricken peoples would not have been so deep.

But Hitler arranged that hot on the trail of the armies of occupation should follow the political and police organisation of the S.S., with its Reichsleiters and Gauleiters transformed into governors and commissars. These were bloodthirsty satraps without exception; they inaugurated campaigns of man-hunting, they filled the prisons, they maltreated women—in a word; they reduced the people in the occupied countries to despair. It was not merely a policy of occupation, but of actual genuine brigandage, at the sight of which Don Roderick's cut-throats would have blushed with shame. The rights of the individual and of the family—even the rights of humanity

in any form, no longer had any weight. Everything was permissible to the S.S. in the name of some alleged supreme law of necessity. I have often heard of instances of German officials complaining openly about the brutal excesses with which Himmler's organisation was stained in the occupied regions. Decidedly the German soldier waged war, but he neither tortured nor maltreated his opponents; on the other hand the soldier in the black uniform of the S.S. was a cruel brute, and was known in Berlin, in Nazi jargon, as the "political soldier". When, years before the war, I had heard that the German Government had taken over castles such as Vogelsang and Marienburg, where a so-called chosen band of Nazi youth was trained in a very strict school to convert them into "political soldiers", I had not the faintest idea that their ranks would be the nursery of a brutal corps whose tenets were justified by their fanaticism. They were the Fuehrer's most loyal henchmen, and though they were not conscious of the fact, they erected a rampart of terror and hatred around Germany.

The attack on Norway was the outcome of a delusion. It is true that the victory over Poland had satisfied Hitler's aspirations with regard to the restoration of Dantzig and of the German provinces to the Reich; it had also satisfied his desire to see the elimination of the corridor which separated Pomerania and Silesia from East Prussia, but the fact that the rest of Poland had been occupied meant a dead weight hampering Germany's arms. The Germans found the harvests destroyed and the organisations controlling the nation's economic life completely out of gear—the stores completely burned, the whole population suffering all the misery that the war entailed. Furthermore, the *francs-tireurs* and the Jews—a countless host of Jews in fact, for whom, much against his will Franck, the Governor, had to decide to restore the ghettos with their synagogues. On the other hand this campaign and its aftermath had brought Germany's frontiers in alignment with those of Bolshevik Russia, a development which caused considerable anxiety in Berlin.

In December Russia attacked Finland in order to consoli-

date her possessions in the Baltic. I must say that this act of aggression stirred up a genuine wave of indignation in Italy as it did in other countries, but it was regarded much more cold-bloodedly in Berlin. Hitler made no gesture to show his disapproval. The Wilhelmstrasse tried to conceal its embarrassment. At Christmas Hitler wired warm greetings to Stalin, adding his personal congratulations to the head of the Soviet Union on the prosperity of the Russian nation.

The German Government was confident that the Great Powers in the West would become reconciled to the disappearance of Poland from the map and would stop the naval blockade. But the very opposite happened. But Germany wanted iron from Sweden, and she also needed to have the sea route open for the transport of her most pressing needs. The blockade was a great nuisance and caused incalculable losses. London and Paris remained deaf to all the eloquent declarations made by Hitler and his Minister of Propaganda to the effect that Germany had a right to a *lebensraum* in the East. It was then that, in sheer desperation, the order was issued in Berlin for the campaign against Denmark and Norway, a campaign that might be considered as having been premeditated, like all Germany's previous forays. Peace with the West was clearly an impossibility. As the surgeon who cuts into a cancerous growth under the vain illusion that he is helping to heal his patient only aggravates the disease, by every new crime he committed Hitler made his own position worse, and removed farther from the German people the likelihood of securing peace.

On March 10 Ribbentrop arrived in Rome to ask Mussolini what he would do should Germany be obliged to undertake a new offensive. The offensive in question was, of course, the one directed against the Western Nations, Belgium, Holland and France. But, no matter what attitude Mussolini adopted, Hitler had made up his mind to undertake that offensive. I have a mental picture before my eyes of Rome looking forward anxiously from week to week to the end of hostilities in Europe, as she imagined that the Powers would eventually become resigned to the changes that had come

about on the Continent. In Rome they did not regard the international situation as seriously as Berlin did.

Why had Hitler let slip the opportunity of the offer made by Queen Wilhelmina of Holland and King Leopold of Belgium to act as mediators for peace overtures? Mussolini should have realised that Ribbentrop would not have been sent by Berlin, had he not known that Hitler had already decided to make an all-out attack on France and afterwards on Great Britain. He tried to gain time, repeating once more what had been said at Salzburg, namely, that Italy would not be ready for three or four years to intervene in aid of the Reich. The possibility of a *tête-à-tête* between the Duce and Hitler was discussed, and a meeting did in fact take place on March 18 in the saloon car of the Rome train. It lasted for three hours. It was then arranged that Italy should speed up her own armaments and take part in the war alongside Germany as soon as possible.

Mussolini's decision was firm and irrevocable. Italy would not have been able to remain long neutral. The neutrality of the peninsula virtually ended with the meeting at the Brenner on March 18, although Italy did not actually go to war until some months later. The Duce had been swept off his feet by Hitler's megalomania.

Had France not come to a miserable end after a fortnight's fighting, had she held out for a long time—say a year or two, Italy, owing to Mussolini's attitude would have joined the war in one way or another. When France collapsed so speedily, the intervention of Italy was only precipitated.

One day the question of responsibility for what happened will be investigated and each of the leaders will have to give an account of his deeds. The chief responsibility, in my view, will lie with those who, by intrigues and lies, created the atmosphere of the Axis. Without this Mussolini would not have been blinded to such an extent that he no longer considered the interests of his own nation, but merely his own prestige, his own power, and his dominion over Europe side by side with Hitler. It has been said that he formed his decisions alone, as he saw that his way of thinking was not shared by

his immediate collaborators. He ordered Cavallero to speed up military preparations, and he muddled arrangements generally in such a way as to reveal his limited acquaintance with armaments. The generals were dismayed and terror-stricken as they saw this headlong dash to the verge of a precipice. It is alleged that Ciano was opposed to the scheme; most decidedly all the general staff were. Mussolini's only supporters were those who at all times cringed to him and whose slogan was, "Mussolini is always right." The country knew nothing until it was too late.

In the meantime Hitler forged ahead with his colossal and hazardous plan. The invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg was heralded by this preamble in the form of an ultimatum to their respective Governments: "If we meet with resistance on the part of the countries which we intend to occupy, we shall crush such resistance by every means in our power." It looked more like the pronouncement of a madman than of a statesman, but Holland and Belgium put up a sturdy stand.

Five days after the beginning of the invasion I was escorted with other journalists to the territories that had already been occupied. We motored from Berlin to Aix-la-Chapelle, the starting-point of what I called "the pilgrimage". Where the main road crossed the course of the Meuse we observed the first evidence of destruction and wreckage. The Maastricht bridge, which had been cut in two, was listing towards the surface of the river. The first Belgian fort on the other side of the river wall was riddled with shells. I came upon a dwelling-house that was so gutted that I could see the interior of the rooms, with the furniture higgledy-piggledy and corpses lying amid the wreckage. The havoc wrought by the Stukas had been appalling. Shell-holes broad and deep enough to swallow three houses, roofs and all, pitted the ground.

We continued our journey along roads that had been badly smashed up and rendered almost impassable in parts, strewn with cemeteries of cars that had been shattered beyond repair. Suddenly I was struck by the sight of a peasant guiding a plough drawn by two oxen in a field alongside our route.

The contrast between peace and war could not have been more strongly emphasised. Another sight that I have never forgotten was the continuous procession of civilians returning to their villages, using any kind of transport available, from bicycles to handcarts on which were piled the few wretched indispensable articles from which they refused to part. These wretches had fled to the rear when they heard the first thunder of artillery, but after they had been overtaken by the German mobile columns they retraced their steps, realising that flight was futile. In those days I believe that there was an exodus of the masses in Belgium and France that, in the vast areas it covered, and in its numbers, surpassed the mass migrations of antiquity. At a rough conjecture some five or six million fugitives underwent twice, in a very brief space of time, a tedious march in quest of security and peace—the first time to flee from the invaders, and the second time in the opposite direction and for the same purpose.

At Louvain there was a strange scene between a German official who accompanied us and the director of a museum, with regard to the responsibility for damage reported to have been done to a collection of pictures. The official asserted that the director of the museum had declared that it was the English who perpetrated this act of vandalism, to which the director retorted, "It has nothing to do with me. It has nothing to do with me. I was not present." One could read the unspoken words on his lips, "It was yourselves that did it. Why do you ask me?" It was very curious to observe the insistence with which these Germans who accompanied us, officials of the Ministry of Propaganda and officers of the Wehrmacht, compelled local civilians to give evidence in our presence that was unfavourable to the English or French defenders.

They brought us face to face with some prisoners. On one side were the British, on the other the French, and communication between them was forbidden. A clumsy journalist was trying to photograph a group of Lorraine prisoners, when one of them, who was caught from behind in the beam of the projector, turned round and exclaimed in an indignant tone,

"Get to the front, sir. I am accustomed to be photographed in front."

Brussels was like any other city occupied by the Germans. The people themselves were listless and resigned. There was a great hustle in the streets, and the shops were so busy that they were completely sold out in eight days. Newspapers printed in Germany were on sale immediately after the occupation. An undefinable sense of suspicion brooded over everybody. And the sense of inhibition that comes from reserve, the simulated indifference, the stifled hate, made the German soldier feel embarrassed and frightened, because he could not understand, and never would understand that he was not engaged on a mission, as he had been told, but on a marauding expedition. The German military commanders and the political heads of the occupied countries not only knew that there could not be cordial contacts between the subject peoples and their own soldiers, they did not so much as make any effort to create them. Their task was to carry out the orders of Berlin, which were strictly confined to the code of martial law.

The Italian ambassador Paulucci de Calboli remained in Brussels, although, according to the German military authorities, he should have packed up his belongings and returned to Rome, as his mission ended with the German occupation of Belgium. From the German standpoint an occupied country was regarded just as part of the territory of the Reich, even though it might be given the euphemistic name of Protectorate or Governorship or some other title. Since matters stood thus, diplomatic representatives of other states became superfluous in the capitals of such occupied countries. In the case of Italy, the German military command did not insist too rigidly on Paulucci's departure, but it was made clear to him that his stay in Brussels could not be unduly prolonged. When the Belgian forces ran the risk of being completely wiped out, Paulucci tried to intervene between Leopold and the German command in order to avoid further bloodshed. Before long, Leopold gave orders to capitulate—but Paulucci certainly did not influence him in the matter—and in his capacity as

prisoner of war, was sent to a castle in Flanders. Even then the Italian ambassador tried to maintain contact with the King, although he was in captivity. It must not be forgotten that King Leopold is a brother of the Crown Princess of Italy, and consequently related to the House of Savoy. I happened to arrive at the moment when Paulucci had just played a very successful trick on the German Command. They had forbidden him to visit the King, but having placed on the bonnet of his car two little flags, one Italian and the other with the Iron Cross on a white field, for the German army command, he set out for the castle in which Leopold was imprisoned. The sentries let him pass, and Paulucci had a long conversation with the young monarch. The purpose of his intervention was fundamentally in favour of the German cause. He suggested that the King, the Primate of the Belgian Church, and what still remained in Brussels of the Belgian Government should inaugurate a policy that would be more conciliatory towards Germany and towards its interests as the occupying Power; that the Belgian people, placing their faith in the word of their leaders, should realise that actually being under the "armed protection" of Germany was not a calamity; and that the Allies, by giving up the idea of resistance to the bitter end, had in a definite sense betrayed the people of little Belgium after having dragged them into the war, mainly for the protection of their own interests.

I believe that Leopold refused to accede to the ambassador's suggestion, but two days later the Primate of the Catholic Church in Belgium issued a pastoral letter on the lines urged by Paulucci, advocating a benevolent attitude towards the German soldiers. The German command did not show the faintest gratitude for this personal intervention on the part of the representative of Italy. Paulucci was cold-shouldered, the general in command of the army of occupation refused to meet him again, and a protest was made to Rome through diplomatic channels about the ambassador's "unwarranted meddling". Soon afterwards he was recalled from Brussels.

Our "pilgrimage" from Brussels to Holland, and from Holland to Flanders lasted two days. The Germans were in

the neighbourhood of Calais. We spent some hours at the headquarters of the army under Reichenau's command, in the vicinity of Enghien. The general seemed to me to be always alert and as cocksure of himself here as he was in the plains of Poland. One of his adjutants told me that every morning, always with his monocle adjusted, he was in the habit of doing a marathon walk at an athletic stride from command headquarters to the most advanced outposts of the army. Formerly, when he was a subordinate to Blomberg, he was termed "a political general", a figure behind the scenes, who could exercise a certain influence over the Fuehrer, by whom he was considered "the best of my generals". He too died mysteriously, like so many other generals who had come under the suspicious eye of Himmler.

As we advanced over the battle area I was struck by the fact that great stretches of territory showed no trace of battle while others were strewn with corpses, wreckage, shell-holes and bomb-craters. For instance, after having passed through a village in which fighting had taken place, I came upon a stretch of over fifty kilometres which showed no traces of war. Perhaps the only indication to show that an invading army had passed through it was the sight of numerous wrecked vehicles piled up on both sides of the road; but there were no shell-holes nor bomb-craters nor dismantled fortifications. The advance of the Germans had been by leaps and bounds, so to speak, and it was obvious that the various defensive lines where a sturdy resistance had been encountered were separated in many instances from one another by miles. The countryside was by no means completely strewn with obstacles which had been placed in the enemy's path by the defenders as would have occurred in trench warfare, but it consisted of big stretches of intact ground alternating with battle areas. It was quite evident that the defenders, faced with the overwhelming superiority of the attack, had only been able to stem the onset of the invaders with the greatest difficulty and only where the nature of the ground permitted it. Therein lay the explanation of the phenomenally short duration of the campaign in the West. Combats were only a matter of a few

hours, but they were intensely fierce. But these short-lived engagements had left in their wake indications of unprecedented devastation. To the rear of a thicket which had been heavily bombed I came upon the remnants of a battery of field artillery which had been wrecked by the Stukas. From the shapeless mass of human bodies mingled with the carcasses of horses there rose an awful stench. From beneath an ammunition wagon, two wheels of which had been blown up, I caught a glimpse of the blood-stained tunic of an English corporal. Alongside lay a wallet, apparently his, with its contents scattered far and wide over the grass. A letter stained with a light red tint caught my eye. It ran thus:

MY DEAR GORDON,

Who can say where this letter of mine will reach you? The last information I received stated that you would be going with your regiment to France. If this is so, and if, as I fear, you find yourself at this moment in the midst of danger, take care of yourself, and think of me and of your little daughter, who is lying in her cradle and smiling at the father who is so far away and whom she has never known so far. You should see her join her little hands though she does not understand what her gesture means, whenever I speak about you. All her relatives have come to see her. . . . Willy, who has got eight days' leave to see his parents and his sweetheart, has made our baby crow with delight when he imitates the noise of planes. . . . We have not had any alerts for three days now. The last time the bombing lasted half the night. . . . Our little one would not sleep in the shelter. Our neighbour on our own landing is constantly advising me to take the baby to a safer place, but I cannot make up my mind about it. Perhaps you will advise me. I am anxiously waiting for you. . . . With her love and mine.

Your wife.

And there he lay mangled and dismembered in his blood-soaked tunic, while his little daughter, who did not know him, was waiting for him with her hands clasped together.

Outside Dunkirk, in a little village named Bregues, our column halted, for Captain Willis, our guide, said that he had definite instructions from Command Headquarters not to approach too near to the battle area. He did not wish that we should enter Bregues, for when we were just on the outskirts of the village, we saw a thick bank of black smoke billowing skywards from its deserted houses. Somehow I had the impression that I was not looking at an actual scene of battle, but at the appurtenances and scenery of a set in an open-air film. These shattered and blazing buildings, the wrecked church and parish-hall, the almost illegible names over half-demolished shop-fronts—all this panorama of devastation and squalor had the atmosphere of make-believe about it that one finds as a background in sets of adventure films. An Italian colleague of mine had the misfortune to be placed under arrest by German soldiers at Bregues. Our convoy, following along the lane behind the church, had climbed a bastion that had been built for the defence of the village, the work of Vauban, as were almost all the fortifications in the neighbourhood. From an artillery observation post we were able to follow the developments of a German attack in the valley beneath us which was opposite Dunkirk. At most it could not have been two kilometres from the Western fort of Dunkirk to the observation post. Almost simultaneously Virginio Lilli of the *Corriere della Sera* and myself had the same idea, namely, to go through the wood in the valley beneath us in order to get nearer to the scene of combat. But Lilli was unlucky; he had not gone three hundred yards before he was pulled up short by an abrupt order: "Halt!" He found himself facing two German sentries.

Every attempt at explanation was unavailing. To begin with, Lilli did not know a word of German. As they did not understand Italian, he tried English on them—English on two soldiers of the army that was fighting against the British! I only know that they promptly jumped on him, and took him from one military post to another, covering some ten kilometres in the process. He told me afterwards that they led him through clearings strewn with corpses and across a marsh

in which an entire division had been engulfed in the mud. They pushed him along with their rifle-butts until his shoulders ached, for they thought they were dealing with a spy. Lilli trusted to luck, and was set free after four hours. It happened that at one divisional headquarters there was a German officer, who, in addition to knowing Italian, was a constant reader of the *Corriere della Sera* and in particular of the articles by Lilli himself. So he came back to our convoy, where we were all very sorry for him, with his clothes all muddy and torn and his face red and perspiring, to be taken before the unspeakable Captain Willis who was in charge of the convoy and threatened to report Lilli to the High Command for being guilty of a breach of discipline during the course of his journey.

With the exception of such rather exciting interludes, those trips to the front were calculated to exasperate any competent journalist. We were not permitted to be present at battles, we were not placed in suitable environment to describe any engagement, but everything possible was done to keep us as far as possible from the zone of fire, and we were only showed ruins! On another occasion, a fortnight later, when we made a second trip of this kind, the officious Willis forced us to make an endless series of halts, because he wanted to greet old acquaintances of the last war who were living in the battle area. What fun we had out of this guide of ours, who was always putting on airs of importance, yet was in a constant state of terror at the thought of his own responsibility! I was convinced that those days were absolutely wasted ones, and that the German officials had planned these trips in order that we might write our reports in accordance with a settled scheme that fitted in with their propaganda. They even prevented us from telephoning to our papers during the journey: that was only possible when we got back.

But even in Berlin the task of a journalist was more than difficult—it had become monotonous. It all boiled down to insipid comment on the official bulletin, which was nothing more than an amplification of the series of conferences which were constantly being held at the Ministry and did not tell the whole truth. Any attempt to show initiative was forbidden.

Even had we got interesting information we should not have been able to use it. Our work became more and more standardised every day. Even if there had been only one journalist for each country to report to his national press, it would have produced exactly the same results.

But this did not last long. Early in June the big battles of Flanders and Artois ended with a sweeping German victory. The French army was routed along the whole front. The Germans were approaching Paris. It would have been imprudent to leave Berlin, for incidents were following each other with lightning speed.

In the meantime Attolico had been superseded by Dino Alfieri. His removal was yet another capitulation to Berlin's orders. True, Attolico was no longer his old self. The pace of the war had terrified him, and any enthusiasm for the Axis had vanished from his soul. When he sent reports to Rome, they were couched in a very alarmist strain: even her easy victories he maintained, were insufficient to assure Germany that supremacy for which she was seeking, for the war would not end with them, but would probably last for anything from five to ten years, and Europe would go headlong to utter ruin. Such were the views Attolico now expressed on the situation. When they read these statements at Palazzo Chigi they just shook their heads and placed them in the archives. Attolico must be mad. Why should he be so pessimistic at the very moment when the battles fought by the Reich had been won in a period of some weeks at the outside, and had ended with the unquestionable total defeat of the enemy? Besides, how could they retrace their footsteps now? The Axis was established, and it would have to continue.

Mussolini would not change his views. As a matter of fact, Mussolini would not listen to the voice of reason. The appointment of Alfieri to Berlin was made as a prelude to the entrance of Italy into the war. The German Government, having been informed by its ubiquitous spies of the change in Attolico's attitude and of his reports to Rome, demanded that he should be transferred immediately. So he had to go; on his return he

was appointed ambassador to the Vatican, in place of Alfieri.

After the defeat of France the Duce was afraid that the war was hastening to an end, in which case Germany alone—and not the whole Axis—would profit by the victory. According to Mussolini's view, Italy could not stand aside, as a mere spectator of events. She must take her place in the fight before it ended. "What? At the eleventh hour?" those who counselled caution, asked. "Yes", Mussolini countered. He was all the more anxious for war now that he had a chance of marching against the French whom he detested. He could never shake off his old antipathy to the French régime, which had fought against Fascism from the very beginning. When it was realised that Mussolini was in a feverish hurry to join in the fray, many people tried to oppose him, maintaining that it would be madness to go to war. Chief among these were the members of the General Staff, who maintained that Italy was still quite unprepared to take the field. A declaration of war, they held, would mean not only pitting herself against France, who was now exhausted by her fight with the Germans—and the psychological repercussions of this act would be painful—but also against Great Britain, who was still intact, mistress of the seas, and a mighty obstacle to any attempt on the part of Italy to maintaining the connection between the peninsula and its African dominions. There were generals who threatened to disobey orders, and men in important political posts who were quite prepared to resign in support of their views. But it was all of no avail. Mussolini felt himself secure in his role of dictator. He had no doubt that the nation would follow him. Germany could not lose. So Italy too had victory in her pocket.

At six o'clock in the evening of June 10 the radio announced Italy's entrance into the war. Italy was at war. Without arms! Italian forces had already gone into action against the French in Savoy. I hastened to hear Alfieri, speaking from the balcony of the Embassy in the Standartenstrasse to some hundreds of Fascists to announce that we were actually at war. The Rome radio broadcast Mussolini's speech in the Piazza Venezia. It struck me that the volume of applause from the

crowd was neither very vociferous, nor was it sustained. After a few minutes the relatively feeble roar died away, and its place was taken by marches and anthems. A people who for twenty years had known nothing but the will of the despot, and in meek obedience to him, being rather slow themselves, had become accustomed to look at the world and its problems through his eyes, a people who for twenty years had lost the faculty of expressing their right to decide as a sovereign state, because the despot Mussolini would not allow anybody to interfere with his own procedure, and in order to exercise his power without hindrance had contrived to surround himself with a network of vast and complex organisations—such a people is not in a position to make a stand even in times of the utmost gravity. In the course of twenty years Mussolini's Fascism had transformed the conscience of the nation. There was no form of national activity that did not pass through his filter.

A few circles of the intelligentsia managed to maintain a certain degree of independence. The working classes could only grumble, though good-naturedly—and unavailingly. On the whole, the people could not be said to feel easy and satisfied with what was going on, but they could neither speak nor act, as their tongues had been paralysed and their hands tied. To a people reduced to such a negative state of mentality war was nothing more than a further tax imposition. Both war and taxes were lamentable burdens, but how could they resist them without an organised front, especially when they were long unaccustomed to making a stand against anything? Furthermore, there were in Italy a fair number of youths who had become intoxicated by Fascist theories and imperialistic propaganda, who would be quick to obey and almost glad to fight.

The nation had no idea that it was not prepared for war from the point of view of armaments. Military preparations were "palace" secrets, known only in the Duce's office and the Ministry of War. Even the ministers themselves had no idea as to the number of cannon, tanks and planes that Italy possessed. Marshal Caviglia told me that the Italian forces

were reminiscent of stage armies, and that during manœuvres in Sicily Mussolini had intensely amused the generals by his candid expressions of opinion in military matters.

The entrance of Italy into the war amazed and somewhat annoyed the Germans. I was in the house of some Berlin friends that evening, and not one of them showed the faintest trace of appreciation or gratitude for Mussolini's gesture. What was the point, they asked, of this intervention on the eve of a sweeping victory for Germany? What had the Italians done beyond jumping on the back of a France that was already beaten to her knees, and whose military power had been liquidated by Germany's armed might? Was it a noble gesture? Furthermore, would not Italy's entry into the war entail troubles and difficulties for Germany in the further prosecution of the struggle? "Your preparations are totally inadequate", those German critics went on. "That being so, why did you not remain neutral?"

As a matter of historical fact Berlin never asked Italy to help her in the field. The German generals were convinced that even under the most favourable circumstances Germany would gain no advantage from Italian support. The military commissions that returned from their visits to Italy gave a picture similar to that which Blomberg had outlined for the Fuehrer after his first glimpse of the organisation for the defence of the peninsula. But Mussolini did not wish to figure as the poor and feeble relation who takes a back seat and is forgotten. He longed for the moment when he could restore Italy to her pride of place and incidentally elevate himself by success in the field. "I want a couple of million corpses", he said one day, "in order to be able to take my seat as a conqueror at the peace conference and dictate my terms too."

When Paris fell, I, who was in Berlin during the whole of that crisis, never heard a word of real unfeigned enthusiasm from the German people. My servant Martin, who always comported himself as though he were made of stone, handed me a telephone message with news of the occupation of Paris without the slightest trace of emotion. Had he informed me

that there were chickens for sale in the market, he would have displayed far more interest. No flags were hung out by the people of Berlin and there were no demonstrations. I pictured to myself the oration that would have been staged in Italy had Mussolini entered Paris instead of the Germans. In a broadcast Goebbels explained that the occupation of Paris was an event of secondary importance, and that the German people, conscious of their great mission in this war, were not the kind to give way to extravagant demonstrations of exultation. I do not know whether he was sincere, or whether the German people detested war to such an extent as to be insensitive to the symbolic significance of what had happened. History was repeating itself—the history of the years 1870 to 1940—and Gianbattista's theory of cycles and recurrent cycles, that is to say of historical cycles that keep repeating their courses, now seemed more than ever before to have been prophetic.

Chapter VII

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORESEEN

THE last shots between Italians and French were exchanged on the morning of June 25, 1940, a morning of brilliant sunshine which lit up the peaks of the Savoy Alps in radiant beauty. From the very start this had not been a war, so much as an alignment of two armies opposite one another. In addition to their lack of a really warlike spirit, these armies did not even know what the fight was about. On one side were the French forces, paralysed by the realisation that on the other fronts the position was utterly hopeless for their country, and that while the Germans were approaching the capital, France was rapidly going to pieces. On the other side were the Fourth and Seventh Italian armies, which had been suddenly mobilised from their homes in Piedmont and Liguria, and sent to fight in obedience to a command which seemed to them inexplicable, for they were utterly lacking in any psychological and practical preparation for a war of this kind. It was only in Rome that anyone knew the why and the wherefore for this unexpected decision. The declaration of war had not been preceded by any propagandist political campaign. Mussolini alone knew the hidden motives for this abandonment of a neutrality which had seemed to the Italians to be the only reasonable attitude, in the midst of the upheaval of which Europe was the theatre.

Never had Italy felt so conscious that she was situated on the fringe of the Continent, as during that period of Europe's paralysis, when she lay athwart the Mediterranean, which she proudly termed "*Mare nostrum*". Never had she been so glad to have for her protection the massive and mighty chain of the Alps, a chain that had but few gaps. In Turin, in Genoa and in Milan a few hours before Mussolini declared his intention of taking part in the war from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia, life ran its smooth course of normality

without any presentiment of the troubles ahead. The dramatic atmosphere of the hours that precede a grave decision was limited to those few officers in Rome who transmitted the peremptory order given by Mussolini. But outside Rome nobody expected anything. The Fascist Press did not lay any great stress on the imminence of war. There were just some articles in the Rome newspapers inspired by the government, which made vague Sibylline allusions to the possibility of Italian intervention. Even in Germany, as I have said, it was not considered necessary for Italy to fight, and while such a possibility was not entirely ruled out, in the European capitals it was considered remote and hardly worth entertaining. It is true that Nice, Savoy, Corsica and Tunis had always been among the urgent claims of Fascist propaganda, in and out of season, but after all, they were regarded as merely perfunctory aspirations, bound to crop up periodically like the chorus in a song.

To resume, the country was completely taken by surprise at the decision to go to war. The army, whose task it is always to obey, answered the reveille as ever. But for all that, it was utterly unprepared. It would be impossible to estimate the numbers of men ordered to march to the French frontiers, and it is almost certain that even in the Ministry of War no reliable statistics on this point were available. Seated at his desk as Under-Secretary of War, Cavallero carried out the orders given him by Mussolini as Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. General Cavallero was one of the few men who later ended by suicide their wretched existence as servile followers of the Duce; men who, whenever Mussolini opened his mouth, were ready to carry out his despotic whims, and to whom the most important thing in the world was to hold their jobs. The most incapable general in the Italian army held the responsible post of Under-Secretary at the Ministry of War. Cavallero had finished up obscurely at the end of the last war, as a divisional commander; he then left the army to enter business. When Mussolini first met him he was manager of a firm engaged in the manufacture of rubber in Milan. The people of Milan, who knew him very

well, were astounded at his appointment. It was quite obvious that Mussolini was an utterly incompetent chief if this was a specimen of his selection of suitable collaborators.

Under the command of General Guzzoni the two armies hastened to take up their position along the French frontier. They had not even the faintest conception of a tactical plan. At first the general staff tried to convince Mussolini that this "picnic" might have unpleasant reactions. If it was a question of fighting, he ought to know that the army had no up-to-date equipment; it had remained in the 1918 stage, so far as armaments were concerned. They had antiquated field-guns, about 149 medium-bore guns and howitzers that had done duty on the Carso and in the battles of the Piave, and other pieces from the Skoda works belonging to the Austro-Hungarian artillery. They had, furthermore, very scanty supplies of ammunition and the mechanical transport system was inadequate. For twenty years the army had been trained in the principles and methods of defensive warfare, and nobody had ever so much as suggested offensive warfare. As it was a question of marching against France the Ministry ought to have known that the Italian ramparts on that frontier were inadequate, as there were only a few old forts and scattered pill boxes, barely sufficient to give practice to the military schools and Piedmontese regiments during the summer months. Those of France, on the other hand were equipped with all the latest technical devices. The fort of Chenaillez alone was worth the whole system of the fortifications of the Italian Alps, which consisted of a few forts and strongholds that recalled the wars of the last century. Some batteries still consisted of bronze cannons, such as are shown in military museums. From Rivoli, where command headquarters was stationed, Guzzoni sent General Cavallero a number of objections and observations. The only reply he received was the following order, in the form of a circular addressed to the commanders of the units scattered over the Italian front, and signed by Mussolini: "Fight even though you are short of arms."

Nevertheless, fighting did not begin everywhere along the

front line immediately after the declaration of war. On the Bardonecchia and Cesana sectors skirmishing started on the 18th. The French Artillery replied with well directed aim. As the Italian army was unable to advance, there were only left to them the few well known passes, chiefly Monte Ginevra and Mont Cenis, and the gap to the north of Ventimiglia, where operations could be carried out at a quicker tempo. But the Italians had no adequate motor-transport for essential services. While it could not be said that the Army Service Corps was short of provisions, it had no proper means of transport and in the field-kitchens there were not enough utensils to cook the food. Altogether it was a slipshod method of waging war, with makeshift devices patched up at the very last minute, and an appalling lack of organisation. Some pieces of artillery which were rather ancient and rusty blew up with the first shots they fired, killing some of the gunners; the ammunition, too, had not been overhauled and checked.

By good luck the fighting only lasted for a fortnight—not long enough for the Italian public to be aware that we were at war. Food had not been rationed, and the only indication that hostilities had commenced was the black-out in the big centres. There were no air-raid shelters, however, and no gas-masks were distributed. Still less interest was shown in the war, outside Piedmont and Liguria.

Then one day news came from Germany of the complete defeat of France. I was in Berlin at the time. Millions of Germans gave a sigh of relief. Things had turned out better than had been anticipated. It seemed incredible that France could have been crushed in such a way in one fortnight. But had the war ended for good? The English had been driven from Dunkirk, forced to abandon the continent and retreat to their own islands. No doubt the German air force must have taken precautions to forestall new British landings on the coast of Belgium and France. Furthermore, the overthrow of France involved the complete collapse of the French Democratic régime, whose assistance Britain would have needed to organise further resistance. Idols like Gamelin and Weygand had proved unable to prevent the French defence

from being crushed and mangled under the steam-rollers formed by the German panzers. No, surely the war could not have rushed to such a sudden conclusion.

In the breath-taking atmosphere of those dramatic hours we journalists made our preparations to go to Compiègne. The scene of the Franco-German armistice has been described by hundreds of witnesses before me. It is sufficient for me merely to emphasize the insult which Hitler wanted to offer to France by selecting for the conclusion of this armistice the very same locality in which on November 11, 1918, France imposed her terms on a conquered Germany. Not only the very same locality, but even the very same clearing in a forest, among the monuments and inscriptions recording the humiliation of Germany twenty years previously. Among these inscriptions there was one before which Hitler halted for some minutes; it ran thus, "Here fell the criminal pride of a German empire which aimed at enslaving all the other nations of Europe." Hitler even selected the self-same saloon carriage belonging to General Foch which had been actually drawn up at the very spot where it had stood once before. Even its internal fittings had remained exactly as they were when the German plenipotentiaries had been obliged to listen to the terms of the armistice and put their signature to the document embodying them.

Hitler took his full revenge even to the most minute detail. By being present at the reading of the death-sentence on France, he wished to have the satisfaction for which he had been so long waiting, of looking the humiliated Frenchmen in the face. The chief French delegate, General Huntziger, looked grave, Admiral Leduc could not hold back his tears, while the other members of the delegation, immobile as marble statues, took their seats and stared rigidly before them.

Huntziger, having come to Compiègne on Pétain's instructions, knew that he had to sign the armistice with Germany; what he did not know was that its ratification would be contingent on the signing of another armistice—the armistice with Italy. The instructions he had received did not go as far as that. But the German ultimatum stated distinctly that

hostilities between the Reich and France would cease only when a similar agreement had been drawn up between France and Italy.

He tried to get into communication with Bordeaux, then the headquarters of the French Government. But there was no telephone line in existence; there were barely the field lines which only reached as far as a certain locality half way to Bordeaux. Long hours of feverish waiting passed. The telephone mechanics did their utmost to extend the military line already existing in order to secure contact with the French Government. With the precipitate retreat of the French forces the war situation had converted all those tracts into one desolate and stricken battle area with a non-existent traffic system. The French delegation was obliged to motor to Paris to spend the night there. The next day it returned to Compiègne with Pétain's endorsement of the terms of the armistice. France agreed to conclude an armistice with Italy also. A second delegation actually left on the same day by aeroplane to sign at Villa Incisa, on Lake Maggiore, the document ending the war. The die was cast.

Words are inadequate to describe the feelings with which the German people regarded this delay of one day in the armistice negotiations. The suspense of twenty-four hours engendered among the German people the greatest contempt and resentment against us Italians. "You only came into the war yesterday, when the whole thing was practically over", they growled; "and on account of you we must wait to secure peace for ourselves. Between to-day and to-morrow, the day for signing, other German soldiers will be killed or wounded, and it will be all on account of you." "These Italians, of course", said another, "they are always like spanners in our works." "Now Mussolini has had his own little war", said another, "perhaps he will be satisfied."

How I wished that the Fascist leaders, and the Duce especially, could hear these words. I sensed the unlimited scorn in which the Germans held my country and my people, both of them innocent; it hung over me like an incubus. At that moment of taking extreme decisions the abysmal gulf

between the two races was very apparent. There rose to the surface all the aversion and congenital antipathy of the German for the Italian, who is despised as a mandoline-player, a clown, a fatuous ass, a dawdler and a nobody. I have travelled in a great many countries, but I am certain that in none of them are we Italians held in such poor esteem as in Germany. Many countries, which do not feel towards us the loathing entertained towards us by the Germans, pay tribute to the genius of the Italian race; but in Germany, whenever they speak with any generosity about Italy, they mean her climate, her natural beauty, her landscapes and her masterpieces of art. As a people the Italians are utterly worthless in German eyes; if there is anything worth while in Italy, it is of German origin; if there is a genius in Italy, they discover his German ancestry. Even Mussolini, when the Germans saw that he was an outstanding personality, had to have German ancestors, if we are to trust the genuineness of certain gencalogical researches made in Berlin.

The swift collapse of France upset all hitherto entertained conceptions of war. Nobody anticipated that the great and powerful Republic across the Rhine would fall like a ripe pear shaken by a gust of wind. All the capitals in the world were smitten with bewilderment and terror. The general impression was that either France had not fought, or that the military power of Germany contained some mysterious element of invincibility and invulnerability that transcended all the experience of history. In short, Germany was deemed irresistible. Her monster tanks had swept across France crashing down on every obstacle at a lightning speed. To what was all that due? the nations anxiously asked. What was the secret of the German victories? Everybody knew that France was ruled by a corrupt and weak government, but politics was one thing, and war another. The very mention of the French army had hitherto inspired respect both in Europe and abroad. Some tried to explain the collapse of France as the result of strategic blunders on the part of the French General Staff, which consisted of survivals from the previous war. Gamelin was behind the times altogether. Weygand was a

little more modern, but his innovations were no guarantee of success. Practically the whole gang of French generals, men of the "old school tie" type, reservists of the battles of the Marne and of the Ardennes in the last war, should have been placed on the retired list. But there were no young men to replace them.

As in the political, so in the military sphere France was shrouded in the dust which we see settling down, as time goes on, in ever thicker layers on old rickety furniture full of old-world dignity. "France", said Mussolini one day, "is going through the process of senile decay. France is sclerotic and rambling in her speech like certain old men who refuse to die." It was contended, at any rate, that it was these doddering old fossils who brought the Republic to ruin. Democracy, instead of renewing itself and giving a fresh vigour to France, had corrupted her and made her apathetic and indolent.

In Paris, right up to the very eve of the catastrophe, the citizens revelled in negroid syncopated music and the ditties in vogue in the cafés chantants. Dissipated souls paid little heed to the war. Afterwards, when the brief war was ended, there was a speedy resumption of revelry, though on a limited scale, in the haunts of amusement—this time, however, for the amusement of the German army of occupation. It was said to have been a fatal mistake not to have continued the Maginot Line to the sea, for had that precaution been taken, the Germans would not have been able to carry out the surprise manoeuvre. It was affirmed that the German Air Force was far superior to that of France, which was defective in a great many aspects, and that this inequality in aerial armaments had been decisive, because aviation after all had been the real protagonist in the struggle. It turned out that there was no power liaison between the French, British and Belgian forces, and that in consequence there was no reliable system of co-operation between the three armies. As the Belgians had withdrawn from the war, alleging that they had been abandoned by their allies, so the French accused the English of not showing the faintest consideration for the difficulties in which their army had been involved.

Bickering started about the question of responsibility. Laval, taking advantage of the weakness of old Marshal Pétain, inaugurated the policy of an understanding with Germany. The phenomenon was by no means new. Even before the war sporadic tentative veerings to the right and approaches to Nazi Germany had asserted themselves. The Comité de Forge, and the big iron-work industries of France, had supported this movement with their money and influence; so Laval could say that he was the expression of this French drift to the right, which was as yet undeveloped, and had no solid support. French Fascists and French Communists had paralysed France by hampering her moral as well as her material preparations for war. And later on, the fact of having to remain for more than six months in a state of complete immobility and inactivity behind the Maginot Line, facing a hostile Germany, had developed a condition of dangerous slackness—almost a state of trance—among the French, that is to say, but not among the Germans. A conviction had evolved that France would never have to fight. But for all that France was not slow in rallying to the call to arms. The French armed forces did their duty, and the war material available, by no means a trivial supply, was perfectly serviceable. The French armoured cars were superior to the German both in quality and in resistance to shell-fire. The French system of fortifications put up a fierce defence both in France and in Belgium—on this score it suffices to recall Liège. Furthermore, there was neither a shortage of arms nor of munitions. It was only in the air that their strength was negligible.

We must not look for the causes of the great defeat in the inferiority of the defenders, but in the valour and the ability of the attackers. The German Army was marvellous, and its onward rush was a masterly stroke. To say nothing of the long-designed tactical plans, there can be no doubt that a programme had been drawn up by Hitler and the chief of the General Staff, Halder—with the possible co-operation of other generals. What actually evolved was a developing movement, which continued to adapt itself to the terrain as it progressed;

it was, in short, a series of unforeseen situations which the Germans succeeded in dominating in a masterly manner from beginning to end. The merit was neither that of Hitler nor of his general staff but of the perfect machine which they put into the field. It was the merit of the army and the air force, including all the divisions and specialised forces; it was the merit of the millions of officers and men actuated by a deep spirit of mutual solidarity, a profound sense of discipline, initiative, capability and imagination, while every non-commissioned officer was as competent and alert as if he were a general. The result was a harmonious interplay such as had never been seen before, combined with an astonishingly perfect technique, and unlimited good luck. Thus it was that Germany conquered, and France disappeared from the ranks of the Great Powers.

These phenomena did not pass unobserved in Italian circles. Mussolini, that worshipper of brute force, must have been spell-bound by the miracle. How he must have congratulated himself for not having heeded the objections put forward by his general staff! How he must have patted himself on the back for having risked the gamble of Italy's entry into the war! The god of war was on the side of those who showed audacity. Mussolini decided that Italy, through his initiative, would become powerful, and once France was liquidated, the time would have come to teach Great Britain a lesson in Africa. The Duce's eye was on Egypt, Kenya and the Sudan—but also on Tunis.

When he learned that Hitler, notwithstanding the armistice, had decided to continue his advance until he had occupied with his armed forces the French coasts facing the Atlantic, Mussolini prepared on his side, to extend at least as far as Nice his scanty conquests which were limited to a tongue of land stretching out a little beyond Modane. He decided to occupy Corsica and to pounce on Tunis. There was some talk, too, of Germany and Italy impounding and dividing among themselves the remains of the powerful French fleet.

It was just at the point that the trouble started. Perhaps it was with the design of not giving too much of the loot to an

ally who had practically contributed nothing to the victory—although Mussolini claimed that the German advance in France had been speeded up by the pressure exerted by the Italian forces on the Savoy front—that Hitler opposed any territorial seizures by Italy beyond what she had already conquered, which was tantamount to nothing. On no account would he consent to the Italians making a landing in Corsica or Tunis, which was garrisoned by the French Colonial Army. But he put no limits to his own onward march, and after concluding the armistice sent his armies practically to the Pyrenees. He requested Mussolini to wait until peace had been concluded. The Italian Press started a great campaign after June 10 about claims in France and Africa. One newspaper went as far as to demand all Savoy for Italy. The armistice of Villa Incisa was a ludicrous codicil on Compiègne.

Germany next started talking about making many concrete demands on France, such as the exploitation of her chief mineral and industrial resources, the employment of French labour in the provinces of the Reich, and the use of the seaboard of the English Channel as a jumping-off ground for an attack on Great Britain. But not one word about Italy.

Ciano went to Germany in the middle of July in time to hear Hitler deliver in the Reichstag one of those periodical appeals for peace, which he made a habit of issuing after the occupation of a new slice of European territory. How odd it sounded to hear him turn to Great Britain with an appeal for "a little reasonableness and good sense"! Ciano was in the front row of the diplomatic gallery, and by his presence he endorsed the concurrence of the Fascist Government with the Nazis in this quaint belated peace move. It was quite obvious that those present at that meeting did not show the enthusiasm displayed at previous gatherings. There was practically no applause. It looked as though Hitler were indulging in a monologue dealing with some remote future contingency. To a certain extent this lack of enthusiasm was abnormal. If ever any occasion called for a definite reaction in the Reichstag it was this one, when a speech was being delivered, on the morning after a great victory, appealing for a definite ending

of the war. But nobody any longer had any faith whatsoever in Hitler's words—not even his own immediate Nazi entourage. It was plain that the omens for the future were rather gloomy.

Attolico was no longer there, with his normal sour scowling expression, but in his place was Alfieri, a decorative figure with an eternal cheerful smile and the deportment of a cavalry officer, elegant and perfumed like an actress. A magnificent reception was given at the Italian Embassy at which the usual leading statesmen were in attendance, Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Himmler, Funk, etc., all except Goering. But on this occasion the official pronouncements were brief and were not published.

Finally I was ordered to accompany Ciano on a visit to the battlefields. We went by special train. Ciano and Ribbentrop were in separate saloon cars with large retinues, among whom I observed that the vast majority were high-placed military officials. The expedition wound its way through the region to the rear of the Maginot Line. Once more I traversed the theatre of the great battle of the tanks that was fought at the end of May. The Maginot Line had remained intact. In the fortifications and galleries linking the vital points of the defence system there were only a few sentries posted. I observed that the French technical personnel, the engineers and the experts who had long been looking after the workings and the maintenance of the galleries, had been left at their posts, because they could not be left unattended with all their complex electrical and hydraulic systems which needed constant observation. But the Maginot Line was as much *virgo intacta* as at the beginning of its construction.

The focal point of our trip, in accordance with the programme, was the Hill of Douaumont, famed twice in recent military history, firstly in connection with the famous battle of 1916, and secondly in connection with the battle in this war. The summit of the hill commands a view of the richly cultivated French countryside, bounded on the east by the dark contours of the mining area. Craters caused by the bombs of the Stukas were dotted among the prolific but abandoned cultivated areas. They had erected a palisade astride the round summit of the Douaumont fort, and in the centre of this was

a platform on which was perched an easel with a huge blackboard on which a topographical map had been sketched. When we saw one of the German generals—apparently the victor of Douaumont—approach the blackboard and point with a rod towards the topographical chart, Ansaldo and I exchanged glances which meant that we knew that we had been invited there just for a lecture on military history. Ansaldo, who had been with me in the Saar region, and who, while watching the campaign for the plebiscite, had been very much amused by the arrogance which the Germans displayed in shouting their propagandist slogans, recalled to my mind in a whisper a motto which was much in vogue among the Nazis then, and which he now repeated *sotto voce* in a chanting tone: "Saar immer dar" (the Saar will be always there). I saw what he was driving at. We were not to be spared similar raucous rhetoric this time. For two hours the general, with a minuteness of detail and an asphyxiating pedantry, made us follow on the map the vicissitudes of the fight. On the map were clearly marked in excellent hand-writing not merely the positions of the two opposing forces, but the numbers of the divisions and the regiments and the names of the commanders. I had only to copy them out. It was like the recapitulation by the C.O. of a battle in field manoeuvres.

When I returned to Berlin I sent to the Stefani Agency a realistic account of the battle of Douaumont, making use of the points I had gleaned from the general's lecture. I thought that it was permissible to publish numbers and names, since the war with France had been finished for some time and the armistice had been signed. Great Heavens! When this article appeared, I was urgently summoned by the authorities and got a severe lecture, because, according to their contention, I had been guilty of an act of indiscretion. The official of the Ministry of Propaganda who sent me a very sharp letter of reproof, said that the High Command were very indignant about my indiscretion.

After Ciano's visit Hitler sent Mussolini, as a birthday present, a railway train complete with black-out blinds and,

anti-aircraft defensive equipment, guns, searchlights, and all the other latest technical devices which at that time were to be seen only in Germany. I believe that it is still the only train of its type in Italy.

In the last week in July my wife came with our baby from Capri to visit me in my new rooms at Grunewald. Naturally the impression which Berlin made on her, who had come from a country which the war had not affected at all, was rather poor. She hardly recognised the city as the Berlin she had known. What depressed her most were the long queues in front of the shops and even in front of the box-office windows of theatres and cinemas. The long delays thus occasioned exasperated the public, whose nerves were already very much shattered by the bombardments which the capital had suffered at the hands of the R.A.F. After every air-raid the poorer classes in Berlin were overcome by an uncontrollable nervousness, and then having to stand afterwards for hours on end in a queue in front of a shop to buy a couple of cabbages utterly exasperated the worried housewives. Apropos of all this, here is a little story that went the round in Berlin. In front of a shop an endless line of people were waiting. They were all grumbling and protesting. Suddenly a man at the tail of the queue made a gesture to show that he could stand it no longer and went away declaring that he would dine with the man who was responsible for all that misery—namely, the Fuehrer. After a couple of hours he returned. The queue was still there waiting on the footpath like a long snake and the people were grumbling more than ever. "Well, did you dine with him?" shouted somebody when he took his place again at the tail of the queue. "There was a queue waiting for him too!" he replied in a disconsolate tone.

There was no black-out in Capri, my wife said. I learned from her that our island still followed its old tranquil existence—loafing, picnics and musical evenings. There were no signs of any restrictions, except the rationing of electricity by allowing the use of it for a few hours in the morning, and again immediately after midday, and a little more again in the evening up to a specified hour. The people of Capri went to bed

by candlelight. Capri was full of Germans, mainly women, who came from all parts of the Reich.

My wife opened my eyes with regard to a blow which I had brought on myself. She asked why it was that signed articles of mine no longer appeared in the *Popolo d'Italia*. I replied that my service with the paper had undergone no interruption, and that there must have been a mistake. Like all the other papers the *Popolo d'Italia*, reached Berlin only after a considerable delay owing to war conditions, and consequently I was unable to check up on the omission of which my wife spoke. In the evening, when I was able to telephone Milan, I asked why my signature had disappeared from the columns of the paper. The vague replies I received concealed an obvious embarrassment.

Next morning, obsessed with a presentiment of bad news, I rang up Milan and asked our general manager, Giulio Barella, what the devil was the matter. Barella's only reply was that it was an arrangement by the Government, and that thenceforward I was not to consider myself as their Berlin correspondent. He added that a colleague of mine was on his way to take up my job. And this after twenty-one years of service, twelve of which had been spent in representing the *Popolo d'Italia* in Germany! I tried to get some information in the Standartenstrasse; of course Signor Schmidt's hand had been at work.

Alfieri informed me that the German Government had "decided" that I should no longer represent the Italian Press in Germany. In order to please Schmidt, while waiting for the chance to find a substitute for me, my signature was *sic et simpliciter* removed from my articles—and all this without letting me know. Alfieri, who was there on the spot, might at least have sent for me and put me on my guard, but he did not do so. I had been rather doubtful about this man from the very moment that he had set foot in Berlin. I saw that he was too inclined to cringe to the Wilhelmstrasse, and too eager to win the confidence of the Nazi blockheads. After his arrival he had appointed an Italian journalist named Franchini, representing the *Giornale d'Italia*, as his echo and

confidant—a man after the heart of the Germans because he fawned on the Nazis. I was like smoke in the eyes to this Franchini. I am certain that he used to pass on to Schaeffer of the Ministry of Propaganda everything that we Italians said among ourselves.

A sort of conspiracy against me had developed. Everybody except myself knew about the steps that were about to be taken to supersede me in my post. Alfieri adopted a paternal attitude, and tried to impress upon me his views that such was the way in politics, which every now and then claimed victims. He quoted himself as an instance of this. He had been so many times "torpedoed", and later restored to his job, only to be sacrificed once more later on. "We are soldiers", he declared, "and when our commander gives his orders, whatsoever those orders may be, we must take them as the will of destiny and obey."

I was glad to leave Berlin, but I felt piqued at witnessing the triumph of the intriguers—Braun von Stumm, Schaeffer, Franchini, and my own colleague Verderame; the first owing to an invincible jealousy he had entertained of me for years, the second because he was a Pharisee, who proclaimed himself a friend of Italy, and Franchini, because he had his eye on my job. Finally I discovered that there was a huge dossier compiled against me in the Ministry, and another of a more compromising nature in the offices of the Gestapo, both based on information given by my colleague and my fellow-workers. I had been shadowed in order to find out whom I used to visit socially, and a microphone had been smuggled furtively into my rooms. Only much later, however, did I learn that some of my acquaintances had been summoned to the headquarters of the Gestapo, and had been questioned at length about me. One of them, who was completely panic-stricken when he was asked to call at the Prinz Albrechtstrasse, was ordered to cultivate my company more assiduously in order to follow all my movements and report on them afterwards. And all this time Schmidt was pressing for my removal from Berlin. I believe that the only reason that I did not finish up in a concentration camp was the fact that I was on the staff

of the *Popolo d'Italia*, which was the Duce's paper. Knowing that I would have been able to apply for support if they tried violent methods, they had decided to undermine me secretly. It was of no avail that I fled to the Grunewald in order to escape the enquiries that were made by my persecutors; indeed, it exasperated my enemies still more and made the situation worse. Attolico, who had started this hostile campaign, was now far away from Berlin, and was salving his conscience in the shadow of the Vatican, consoled with all the millions which he had piled up. A few months later he died of a bilious attack. He held his post as Ambassador to the Holy See to the end, and in his last hours received a special blessing from the Pope.

Then began the business of "liquidating" what had been my job in Berlin for twelve years. I asked Morgagni what decision he had arrived at with regard to the Stefani, of which I was also the representative. He replied that I was not to leave Berlin until he had got in contact with my successor by a regular "change of guard". In other words, from that moment the two posts of correspondent of the *Popolo* and of the Stefani which I had filled alone, were now separated. Enrico Massa, who was available after the elimination of the London office, was appointed to the former job, while the latter was allotted to a man of about thirty, named Roberto Suster.

I gave notice that I was giving up my house in the Grunewald, and this aroused frenzied competition because everybody wanted to get it, among others Boemer, the chief of the Foreign Press Department in the Ministry of Propaganda, Schmidt of the Foreign Office, and Alfieri himself, just to mention people whom I personally knew. Later on Boemer won against all competitors, and I formally handed over the house to him. Poor Boemer had no premonition that his residence in my house in the Grunewald would be brief. Barely a year later he was arrested and thrown into the Moabit prison on the charge of having given information on very vital issues to the American Press. Later on, after a long martyrdom he was set free, and was sent to the Russian front where he died fighting valiantly. Two R.A.F. bombs fell in

the garden behind my old house, destroying the terrace, but leaving the walls intact. Every time I passed through Berlin later on I went to have a glimpse from the roadside at my *buen retiro*, where I enjoyed many unforgettable days of tranquil solitude.

I was to have time to reflect. Moscow most decidedly was a temptation, all the more so as it was a question of inaugurating a new office. But how could I bring myself to say good-bye to the *Popolo*, in which a great part of my life had been spent? Would I not lose all the rights due to me for such long service on that paper? Morgagni set my mind at rest. My rights would be recognised, he told me.

He desired a "change of guard" to be carried out with all possible solemnity. For those who are not acquainted with these customs of Fascism, I may mention that it is a full-dress ceremony carried out in the presence of officials of the highest rank and of all the employees who work in the ministry or in the office in which the change occurs. The head of the ministry or of the office or of the industrial concern delivers a panegyric in which he praises the man who is giving up his post and the man who is destined to succeed him. The panegyric is merely a pretext for singing the praises of the Duce. Then the man who is resigning his post and his successor exchange fraternal handshakes, and the meeting ends with a general "alala" to Mussolini. The procedure is somewhat reminiscent of certain funeral ceremonies when a panegyric is delivered before the interment, coupled with hopeful expressions with regard to his heir. Morgagni referred to my long service in Germany, and introduced my successor Suster to the ambassador and to all those present. Among those present I recollect that there was also a representative of the German Ministry of Propaganda.

Meanwhile I had already sent my wife back to Italy. I had to give a couple of banquets to celebrate my departure, and give an opportunity to reply to speeches full of banal platitudes; I had paid visits that I had no desire to pay—in short, I gave a good send off to Suster, for whom I expressed wishes for better luck than had been my lot. In reality I

pitied the poor fellow, for his situation was not a pleasant one. Even though he knew that we were seeking the good-will of the German authorities it would be necessary to maintain a balance between the two press departments on either side of the Wilhelmstrasse, those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry of Propaganda—between Schmidt and Boemer who loathed one another. Anybody who showed himself a little too friendly with the former was hated by the latter.

At the end of August, having returned my keys to the owner of the house and said good-bye to Martin, my servant, who pretended to be deeply touched (after having betrayed me to the Gestapo), I left Berlin by car with two of my friends, a man and his wife who said that they desired to accompany me as far as Innsbruck. The gloom of a motor journey from Berlin to Munich in war-time is unimaginable. The road is a melancholy, depressing and seemingly endless calvary to one who has known it in better days, when it was teeming with traffic, when the wayside stores were not closed and deserted on account of lack of petrol and oil supplies. Apart from the refilling stations which still function it is no longer an arterial road but a cemetery avenue, a long lonely track leading to death. Things were a thousand times better when you drove along in fear of the policeman or the guard who was always ready to pounce on you and impose a fine. To-day on the motor-road the wild goats stray leisurely with impunity from one side to the other.

I spent three delightful days between Garmisch and Eibsee, and then we resumed our journey to Innsbruck where I parted from my friends. I did not know as yet whether I would be entrusted with a post in Moscow, as Morgagni had told me, but if it were so I should be obliged to travel again through Germany. A future with many notes of interrogation opened out before my eyes.

In Milan, I tried to ascertain from the general manager of the *Popolo d'Italia* the decision that had been arrived at concerning me. "None", he said. "You know well that there are no jobs available abroad. Those in London and Paris had

of course to be closed owing to the war. On the other hand we cannot have you in Berlin—orders to that effect came from on top. Perhaps it is advisable to wait. Who can tell but that the position may be brighter in autumn?" I had a suspicion that he was banking on new victories, new occupations of territory, and that he thought that at no far distant date the Germans and Italians would enter London. I told him that I did not expect great changes; I thought that Germany with her victory over France had ended the series of her European incursions. I suggested that the best thing for me to do would be to resign. So it was that I left the *Popolo d'Italia*, on which I had begun to work in 1926 under the control of Benito Mussolini.

I returned to Rome, the city of Byzantine domes, having acquired considerably greater experience than when I left it fifteen years before. It had been raining very hard for a fortnight, and the streets of the capital, the avenues of Villa Borghese, as well as the banks of the Tiber formed one large lake. Along the alleys sweeping down around the church of Trinità dei Monti and through Via delle Quattro Fontane the water poured like a cataract. Water from the heavens, water from the Bernini and Michelangelo fountains.

Against my will I had to return several times to the Government offices to expedite matters. In those offices there was an ever-swelling inflation of superfluous posts. There were hosts of secretaries. They all received miserable salaries, but nevertheless spent heavily. They had hardly any work to do. The only ones who continued to work for their starvation wages were the humble and patient pen-pushers and employees who were waiting to be pensioned off. The others, who were mere political nominees, posed as Solons. Their dogma was the "power politics" code of the invincible Germans—the power politics that had become legendary in Roman circles. If anybody tried to point out that, after all, the war was not yet over, and that the lust for violence which had become habitual with the Germans would in the long run be their ruin, these wise fellows looked on him with pity—and sometimes denounced him.

As for Great Britain, they contended that she did not count at all. Had she been a great nation she should have come to the aid of France, they said, but as she had not done so, she was finished. Germany would hurl her powerful implements of death against the British island, first destroying her from the air and then invading her. There was a lot of talk of a great German expedition across the English Channel. It was said that along the coast of Belgium and in the Dutch canals a large fleet, composed of very swift special barges for the purpose of transporting a large army across the Channel, was being marshalled. During the days which I spent in Rome a squadron of the Fascist Air Force, under the command of General Fougez, was being organised to leave for the air-fields of Belgium and France where it was to co-operate with the Germans in the destruction of England. Mussolini had requested this "honour" in a letter to Hitler, and Hitler had graciously granted his consent. One of those who were preparing to go with Fougez had been the manager of the *Popolo d'Italia* in my days, Vito Mussolini, the Duce's nephew.

But all were not so enthusiastic. Some diplomats, as well as special newspaper correspondents and many army officers expressed their doubts. They thought that things could not always go smoothly, for Hitler's Germany, strong as she was and well prepared as she was, had been little tried by the war so far, for her victory over France was a lightning one. Now, however, she would be dealing with a more dangerous and implacable enemy, an enemy who was adopting the hunger blockade, and was stirring up the neutral countries against her rival. And there was America, who would give the help of her boundless resources to that enemy of Germany.

I should remark that even those who had been accustomed to believe in the indestructible power of Germany did not love her. They merely wanted to drive home the argument that Mussolini did the right thing in lining up alongside Hitler, because Europe was destined to have him as her master for the future. Furthermore, they believed in a Germany, destined to save Europe from Bolshevism. Their slogan was: "Germany or Bolshevism".

In the Department of Popular Culture, Pavolini, who succeeded Alfieri, had set up three or four offices or new sections for establishing links with Berlin. Countless despatch-riders laden with heavy dossiers were constantly going to Germany. The machinery of the Axis entailed the use of hundreds of tons of paper for reports, translations, expositions, etc. Rosso, in control of the headquarters of the foreign press, had converted his office into an actual branch of the office controlled in Berlin by Schmidt. He never held his daily conference with the representatives of the foreign press until he had read on the tape machines a report of Schmidt's reaction to the situation. Rosso had appointed an official, Consol Cuturi, whose duty it was to get Schmidt's instructions every morning. Rosso never gave any information or expressed any view to the foreign press which was not inspired by the attitude of the Wilhelmstrasse. He had established a most thorough system of subservience to the German political outlook. The very same system was adopted towards the national press. Once I witnessed a violent outburst by Braun von Stumm because he had noticed a discrepancy between Gayda's comments and those made by Megerle in the *Boersen Zeitung*, on the attitude of Macek, the leader of the Croat peasants. Berlin expressed the view that Macek deserved sympathetic support, while Gayda lashed that agitator in a ferocious leading article.

The German Embassy in Rome had assumed colossal proportions. Its headquarters were still in Via Conte Rosso, hidden in the grounds of an old-world country mansion. It no longer consisted of just one palace, however, as there were a great many newly-built pavilions, hidden by trees, alongside it. The personnel of the Embassy comprised over a hundred extra officials, including counsellors, secretaries, translators, typists, to say nothing of the Press Bureau which was entrusted to the control of two officials, one to deal with foreign affairs and propaganda, and the other solely as a representative of Schmidt. One of the most highly ramified departments was that of the military attaché, Colonel Rintelen, whom they appointed a general about the time of my arrival. Every two

or three days some emissary turned up by aeroplane from Ribbentrop. The Prince of Hesse was constantly travelling to and fro between Berchtesgaden, Rome and Capri, in which island he owned an estate.

Simultaneously with the colossal development of the German Embassy in Rome our Embassy in Berlin also increased its personnel. Alfieri had taken with him a considerable number of new assistants, very callow youths attached to the diplomatic service. He had set up a maze of sections and sub-sections which muddled and confused even his own staff. Alfieri had transferred his own private secretary to Berlin as well as a certain number of Civil Guards who formed his escort when he was at the Ministry. When he went to present his credentials to Hitler he travelled through the streets of the German capital in a magnificent car preceded by Italian Civil Guards on motor-cycles, in the same uniforms that they wore in Rome.

We had also a non-stop influx of German visitors to Italy that summer. The term "tourists" was by this time a misnomer for these migrant Huns. They did not come for sight-seeing, but to hunt up curios and to buy them. There was no room in the Roman hotels, as these pseudo-tourists had taken them by storm. The foodstuffs in the shops disappeared very quickly, because the visitors from Germany who had come well provided with "tourist lire", pounced upon them. Some dealers in "antiques", anticipating the arrival of these visitors from the Fatherland, bought up all the cheap bargains in the way of old junk for the lowest possible figure in lire. It was the Germans who depreciated the value of Italian currency, and Mussolini let them have their way for quite a long time. The time came, however, when he realised that they were stripping the country bare for a handful of marks, and he put a check on the abuse, by imposing a more vigorous customs control at the frontier. But it was too late. A German woman went the round of the Roman millinery shops, buying a little here and a little there until she eventually succeeded in taking back to Germany without any difficulty fully 2,000 yards of elastic tape for underwear.

The black market had not yet started operations in Italy. The food was considerably better than in Germany, and many delicacies that Berlin had not known for a considerable time, were still to be had in Rome.

I have no idea of the reaction of the Germans of that period to the Roman monuments and museums. Most decidedly the type of German tourist that was turning up daily was quite a different fellow from the tourist of some years back, who used to come to Italy with a Baedeker and a camera in his suitcase, and who had barely arrived at his hotel before he asked the porter for the visiting hours at the excavations and the art museums. The new type of visitor had no time for such dilettante sight-seeing. In the daytime his inquisitive and greedy eyes scanned the contents of the shops and stores, and in the evenings he lolled luxuriously in the lounge of the Tarpeian Rock, of the Cenotrian Grotto, of the Biblioteca del Valle, drinking Castelli wine and singing German airs. None of this was lost on the Romans, for the shop assistants used to chant, as they cycled to work, "Trink, Bruederlein, Trink."

The circulation of the *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican organ, was mounting in a most phenomenal way. The Fascist Government was not in a position to prevent it. The interest taken by the average Roman in the dispassionate and slightly frigid comments of the Catholic newspaper savoured of censure. Another thing I noticed was that in the Roman bookshops first editions of Hemingway, Stefan Zweig and even of Churchill's speeches could be got. The Germans, accustomed to see on the shelves of their libraries only the work of Nazi authors or sentimental Christmas stories with the "Stille Nacht" motif, found on sale in Rome books that were banned in Germany.

Eventually Morgagni put an end to my spell of loafing and informed me that the Duce had given his approval to my nomination as correspondent of the Stefani Agency in Moscow. I was to set out as soon as possible. So I started at once making my preparations. The Soviet Embassy did not keep me waiting long for the visa. I made arrangements with the

management of the Agency with regard to the financial side of my mission. Later on Morgagni informed me that Alessandro Pavolini, the Minister, would receive me in order to give me instructions.

Originally Pavolini was not a politician, but a journalist and a literary man. He wrote colourful articles and travel-ogues for the *Corriere della Sera*. His newspaper sent him to Finland, where he was very popular, not so much through any merit of his own as because his father, a learned Oriental scholar and a student of philology, who had died some years previously, had translated the *Kalevala*. Since the Orientalist, Paolo Emilio Pavolini, had steeped himself in the study of the language of Finland, the legend developed that his son, who was destined later to be Minister of Popular Culture, also knew that language, and was a great friend of Finland. As a journalist and a writer, Pavolini revealed the inferiority complex of those who suffer from being excelled by others and nearly die with envy when they read a well-written article by somebody else. As a politician and a statesman he was a mere *arriviste*. Later he was fighting in the front line among the handful who have backed Mussolini, and was rewarded by the appointment as general secretary to the new Fascist Republican Party. Pavolini is leaping with sheer delight at the chance of being able to assert himself, now that he is alone and has got rid of the most of his dreaded competitors. For this reason and for no other he stands by Fascism.

He received me with studied cordiality. He said he was pleased that I had got the appointment. He was very perturbed to hear that I knew nothing about Russia—absolutely nothing. He said that it was an exceedingly interesting country, and that the material for study in it was extremely new and original. Stalin's Russia, he added, was being kept under close observation. Many legends had been built around that nation, but the Fascist Government had been informed that Stalin was progressing towards a slow, but radical transformation of the Bolshevik régime. I ought to observe the new experiments in the social order, the innovations in the Soviet family life and the religious toleration that had developed.

"You will dig yourself in well", he said in conclusion, and added nothing further, because owing to his very scanty knowledge of the subject, there was nothing more he could add. "Try to work in harmony with your German colleagues in Moscow!" he shouted to me as I rose to leave the room.

This was the kind of viaticum with which I started on my journey. I sent a wire before I left informing my friends in Berlin that I was passing through the city.

At the Brenner Pass station I had a rather unpleasant surprise. I had overlooked, without knowing it, a supplementary regulation in addition to the customary inspection by the police for crossing the frontier. The carabineer who checked the passports, said nothing at first—he did not even make the slightest objection; but when the train was about to start, he returned to my compartment to request me to alight. I tried to protest, but all to no purpose. I was escorted to an office in the station where there were many police-officers with braided uniforms, three or four head inspectors, the usual number of commissars and a swarm of uniformed agents—an abnormally formidable array of officials. One of the inspectors informed me that without an anticipatory communication to them from Rome I could not continue my journey.

"But what communication?" I asked.

"You should have seen that a telegram allowing you to leave the Kingdom was wired to us", he replied.

"But I know nothing about such a regulation."

"So much the worse for you. You should have thought of it."

"And now, how long shall I have to wait?"

"Perhaps a week. Perhaps longer."

"But I must proceed to Moscow without delay. Allow me to telephone to Rome."

"I am sorry. The telephone is only for official use."

"But I want to telephone to the Stefani Agency, and get them to warn your headquarters."

At the mere mention of police headquarters they became more human. Finally they allowed me to put in a trunk call for Rome. I got in touch with the manager of my Agency

who luckily had not left the office. I told him about the incident, and I urged him to speak on my behalf to Bocchini, the police chief.

I had an hour's wait. Around me was a crowd of officials entering and leaving the room, and passing on orders to one another. They explained to me that there would be a meeting the next day between Mussolini and Hitler at the Brenner.

There were several arrests that night. In the room next to mine, they actually searched three travellers who, like myself, had been detained in the middle of their journey. Protests and curses reached my ears. At last a telephone message came giving instructions to let me continue my journey.

At the station in Berlin the first person I ran into was Schmidt, who was hurrying to catch a train.

"So I hear that you are going to Moscow", he exclaimed in a bantering tone. "That's a magnificent job!"

I knew without his telling me, that it was a magnificent job, especially after that interlude in Berlin.

Chapter VIII

BEFORE THE RED KREMLIN

I travelled in Russia from the frontier to Moscow, passing through Minsk and Smolensk, in a comfortable railway coach divided into first and second class compartments to seat two or six passengers. There were no compartments for one traveller only, unless that traveller got tickets to pay for the empty seats. There is no sex-distinction in Russia. Seats are taken as they are available, and men and women sleep side by side in the carriages. The carriages are overheated, and are equipped with radio sets which every now and then—and sometimes even at night—blare out dance-music and news bulletins, to the annoyance of those who want to sleep.

I cannot recall the name of the frontier at which passengers changed from the German train to the Soviet one, with its wide-gauge tracks. Although it was September, the nights were already cold and the country was white with snow. We waited for four hours in an enormous peristyle with a large bench shaped like a horse-shoe, on which the porters deposited our luggage, while our passports were checked and we underwent the usual customs inspection. It was a tedious process, but it was carried out faultlessly, with the greatest courtesy on the part of the officials, all of whom were very young, rather deprecatory, and, I thought, slightly pathetic-looking. They took charge of, and passed all my belongings after giving me an official receipt for them. The single exception was a gramophone record which was, curiously enough, a Russian one, but the author, apparently, was not of the post-revolutionary era.

I was strangely fascinated by the types of humanity I encountered. As I have already said, they were rather young and beardless, and showed an intelligence above the ordinary. They wore the long ash-grey cloaks of the Russian Army. They exuded a strange perfume which titillated the nostrils.

This perfume, they told me, was the standardised product of a state factory, and its scent followed me ever afterwards during the whole time I dwelt in the Soviet Union.

The soldiers, who, of course, did not come under customs control and were waiting with their haversacks and blankets outside the station for the signal to board the train, were mere boys. You would have guessed the age of many of them as something between sixteen and seventeen. The rifles they carried were twice as tall as themselves, and looked too heavy for their rather childish frames. I got in touch with them later on, when they were seated, side by side in the dining-car, where we were asphyxiated by smoke and where waitresses, with ultra-red lips and the nails of their hands varnished in a rather casual way, were serving tea and vodka. The boys were not very communicative, and preferred to sing songs which sounded ineffably sad. One soldier, who seemingly was a general, with a badly-scarred face, and looked rather young for his rank, sat down at a table where there were three soldiers. They neither rose nor did they salute. This did not seem to surprise the general, for a few minutes later he was engaged in a friendly chat with them as though they had all four been old comrades. Incidentally, these were the last few weeks during which there was no obligation on those of the lower ranks in the Russian army to salute their superior officers. Subsequently this salute was made compulsory by Marshal Timoshenko, the Commissar of War.

I arrived in Moscow with a mind eager to receive new impressions. At Bielo-Rusky station, in White Russia, I met Relli, the secretary and interpreter to our Embassy, who had come to take me in his car. Relli was the indispensable expert in all Russian affairs and problems, so far as the Italians there were concerned. Although I was under the impression that he had already booked a room for me in a hotel, I observed with amazement, as we were collecting the luggage, that an official came up to us and asked Relli in Russian if I was the correspondent of the Stefani Agency. When he nodded assent, the official gave instructions that I was to go to the Hotel Metropol, in which a room had been

reserved for me. Now I had informed no living soul about the date of my arrival, and I know that the Embassy, which alone knew of my arrival, had not given information to anybody. How then did this Intourist official get to know about me?

A few hours later I was conducted to an enormous room with a bathroom adjoining. It was a room with very heavy furniture, broad carpets and old prints on the walls. The manageress of my floor, a middle-aged woman, speaking correctly in my own language, asked me if I was pleased with my quarters. From the huge windows I could see in the distance the slope leading to the Red Square, and the curious bulb-shaped domes of the Church of Saint Basil, towering from behind a maze of modern buildings.

When I went down to the foyer of the hotel to write my name in the register, a man suddenly took his post by my side and followed me wherever I went. He was the first G.P.U. agent who had been instructed to dog my footsteps—a rather commonplace individual in a heavy greatcoat with a fur collar. I did not know at the time that another member of the G.P.U. had already settled down in an arm-chair on the landing opposite my room. He was my guardian angel Number Two.

The first impression Moscow gives one is of a certain magnificence, not so much on account of its imposing buildings, as owing to the width of its streets and squares. It is only in the centre of the city that the buildings that have been recently erected are lofty and have a certain dignity, especially in the Gorkovo, Petrova and Kirova Avenues, which are arteries of outstanding magnificence. These highways look like American streets, with their vast streams of motor traffic and their crowded footpaths. Those giant buildings, the Palace of the Syndicates, Lenin's Library, the Hotel Moscow and the Palace of the Soviet, are monumental structures of a severely rationalistic style of architecture. But of course the most striking sight of all is the rectangular dark red silhouette of the Kremlin, surrounded by its broad moat—a fortress rather than a palace.

One mingles with the crowd as it sweeps along like a torrent,

climbing steep acclivities and driving along esplanades, past circumvallations and bastions, or along the banks of the River Moskwa, spanned by enormous bridges, or in a parallel line with the tracks beneath which runs what the Russians call the eighth wonder of the world, the "gut of Moscow", the Metropolitan Railway, which was built under the direction of Kaganovic. The thought strikes one that Moscow has perhaps usurped the claim of being a great capital; Leningrad is more beautiful, more noble and more splendid, whereas Moscow is a country town that has become a metropolis, housing some 5,000,000 inhabitants. Furthermore, it is the State capital, as it houses the Government and the Party. Nevertheless it has the look of an unfurnished city. Those abnormally wide spaces with relatively modern structures surrounding them, structures many of which are rickety and old—wide spaces with very few trees and suggestive of barrack-squares, give material for serious thought.

Previous to the reforms introduced into Russian society and family life by Stalin, reforms which Pavolini had hinted at in my farewell visit to him, conditions in the Soviet Union were such that it might be said there were two Russias, the one that cherished its patriarchal and rural attitude of the compactness and affectionate solidarity of family life, and the Russia of the young men full of ideas, for whom the family did not exist, whose "family" was the party or the syndicate. There was, for instance, the case of the professor, who used to translate the newspapers for our Ambassador. Three years before my arrival in Moscow this poor man lost his only daughter, who at the age of sixteen left home one fine day without informing her parents, and went to live with her companions in the Consomol. Father and daughter became estranged and no longer took any notice of each other when they met in the street. On the other hand I know many Soviet families who through the whole revolutionary period right up to the present day, have adhered to the spirit of the cohesion of the family in the most rigid form.

One often meets officers and soldiers of the Army carrying their infants in their arms on trolley-buses or in the streets.

The young people in Soviet Russia have no religion. They are slightly cynical, are saturated with rationalistic ideas, are discursive, with a strong bias towards polemics and politics. But when I went there, several churches were open; believers were allowed to attend religious services, and the authorities were beginning not to be so insistent in their atheistical propaganda, leaving everybody free to do as he wished. The contradictory tendencies in Russian life which had held sway for so many years, were slowly disappearing. The sale of Christmas trees was permitted at Christmas, with the difference, though, that instead of being lit on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, they were lit on New Year's Eve, and the biggest and most ornamental of these Christmas trees was set up in the great vestibule of the Palace of Syndicates.

I was struck by the ardent quest of learning which the Russian people showed. The Party had encouraged this tendency, and given facilities for its gratification. In the introduction to the constitution of the School of the Soviet Union it is written that the Bolshevik youth should have the gates of knowledge thrown open to them "with the liberality that had been lacking in that field under the authoritarian régime". As a matter of fact, the Soviet people, as they emerge from utter darkness seem to have a great thirst for learning and hasten in large numbers to the educational institutes, to the academies, libraries and museums. Lenin's library, which, with its 9,000,000 volumes, might be regarded as one of the richest in the world, was crowded every day with people of all ages with a thirst for knowledge. Stalin's régime has accomplished a very great deal in this field. It found a crude and illiterate peasant people, and has already given them something more than a mere elementary education.

I learned that the one serious drawback to life in Moscow was the problem of finding somewhere to live. This is understandable when one remembers that in the course of a few years the capital has more than doubled the number of its inhabitants! People told me some amusing stories based on this housing shortage. One of them was about a couple who got a divorce, the husband remaining in the city, while

his ex-wife went to the country with another man. After a few months the woman divorced her second husband, returned to Moscow, but could not find any place to sleep, as all the flats and even the humblest lodgings were occupied. She ran by chance into her first husband who asked her what sort of a new home she had. She had to admit that she had none at all, whereupon they agreed, for sheer utilitarian reasons, to live together again, and so they shared once more what had been their first home.

Many diplomats were obliged to live in hotels while waiting for Burobin to secure a house for them. Burobin was a special official in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, who looked after all dealings with foreigners. He got houses for them, as well as furniture which would be hired; he found servants and put those who needed such services in touch with the doctor or the midwife; indeed, without the help of Burobin, a foreigner would be unable to live in Moscow. Hardly has the stranger arrived in the capital, before he passes from the hands of the Intourist Agency into the maternal and helpful arms of Burobin. To take a case in point: I needed a man or woman secretary to read the newspapers and translate their contents for me. I think it was Henry Shapiro, of the United Press, who suggested that I should employ a Russian lady, who had already done work for other colleagues of his. He told her to call on me, and we settled matters to our mutual satisfaction. But as I was waiting for her the following day, she telephoned to say that she regretted that she could not take on the work I had offered her, as she lived too far away from my hotel, I came to the conclusion that she was simply making up an excuse, and that somebody had induced her to change her mind. However, there was nothing for it but to telephone Burobin to get me somebody else. A girl was promptly sent to me without the slightest delay. Her name was Maria Leschinskaja, and she was destined to help me right up to my last day in Russia.

When I went to the Press Office of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to introduce myself to its chief, I had no idea that I should run into an old acquaintance. They took me to

the proper office, and as I entered a man rose and bowed, a man whose face was almost hidden under an enormous shock of hair. When he tossed back this mane there emerged from beneath it a glabrous, irregular, bespectacled countenance. In a flash I recognised Balgunov, who had been the delegate of the Tass Agency at the Congress of News Agencies at Oslo, and on that occasion had had a serious quarrel with my president, Morgagni. We were not on cordial terms with the Soviet Government in those days. Balgunov brought to the Congress an invitation from his Government for the holding of the congress of the Agencies in Moscow in the following year, and Morgagni, under the impression that he was interpreting the desire of Rome, and backed by his colleague of the D.N.B., rose to affirm that the Agencies in the Axis countries would on no account take part in a congress if it were held in the Soviet capital. Owing to this blunt opposition, Balgunov's proposal proved abortive. Now I saw him once more, holding the important post of Chief of the Press Department of the Narcomindien (The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs).

Balgunov showed no trace of surprise nor the faintest shadow of annoyance at seeing me. Evidently he had been prepared for our meeting. He greeted me like an old friend, and congratulated me on coming to Moscow, telling me that he placed himself unreservedly at my service in whatever capacity I might need his help. He approved of the selection of Maria Leschinskaja as my translator. The Soviet Government had created a small legion of women interpreters—and very efficient and intelligent women they are—for the service of foreigners. When, three months later, I had to change my hotel for a brief spell and go to the National, I found there a manageress who knew Italian thoroughly. Incidentally, she had learned the language by reading the novels of Matilde Serao.

Our ambassador in Moscow was Rosso, who had married an American woman. Rosso is one of those rare diplomats, a half-score of whom, at the very least, a nation would need in order to be fittingly represented throughout the world. Most emphatically he is the most able, the most up-to-date and the

most reasonable of all the ambassadors I have ever met. His labours to secure a *rapprochement* between Italy and the Soviet Union have been more than marvellous, and if the fruits of those labours have sometimes failed to ripen, it is not he, but the Palazzo Chigi that is to blame. He was the successor in Moscow to Attolico—Attolico who had bored the Soviet Government with his eternal complaints and fault-findings, his petulant demands—for which they generously made allowance—because his wife gave birth to an infant in the Russian capital. It is said that she took home with her from Russia the most magnificent fur coats. Rosso, on the other hand, was a gentleman and a man of poise. He was highly esteemed in diplomatic circles, and Steinhardt, the United States Ambassador, often gave banquets at which he and his fascinating wife were guests of honour. All the officials in our Embassy knew English perfectly, as at one time or another they had been stationed in London or Washington. Signor Mascia, the counsellor, was married to an American woman.

The Embassy was situated in the Wesnina Ulica, which ran at right angles to the Arbat. Every morning as I was on my way to see Rosso I used to pass the car which, coming from the Kremlin at high speed, took Stalin to his home outside the ramparts. It was the custom of Stalin, Molotov, and all the other Soviet chiefs, to work all night until morning. The palace which housed the Italian Embassy had been built by an architect in the employment of the Czar; it had seen a tragic event within its walls in the revolutionary era, when Mirbach, the German ambassador, was killed by extremists.

Once I had settled down in Moscow my work fell into three daily tasks—getting the newspapers translated carefully for me, exploring the city, and contacting my older and more experienced colleagues. Shapiro's help was extremely invaluable. I recall with emotion the pictures he used to conjure up of the enigmas of Russian life. He had been in the Union fifteen years, and was still the only one of us who could speak Russian astonishingly well. Next came Henry Cassidy of the Associated Press, straight from Paris. The representatives of the German Press were fairly numerous, and tried to boss

the rest of us. The Poetzgen couple, with the husband representing the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and his wife the *National Zeitung*, each paper having a separate room, were very helpful in giving me any information they could. Sometimes they gave me hints in advance about impending events. Poetzgen was invariably courteous, I must admit, and his wife Gisela would often thrill us with the charming recital of her own poems. My German colleagues enjoyed the privilege, denied to all other newspaper representatives, of being able to telephone their messages direct to their head offices without any previous censorship. On the other hand, American, English and French journalists had to hand over their despatches to the censorship office of the Narkomintern. At first I had to follow this routine also, but realising that there was no use in carrying on like that, as my telegrams reached Rome after the despatches of the D.N.B. had been transmitted by the Hell machines, I told Balgunov that the authorities ought to allow me the same privilege as the Germans enjoyed of telephoning my messages direct, at least to our Stefani office in Berlin, so that they might re-wire it to Rome. In this way, I pointed out, I should get my messages to Rome six or seven hours earlier. Balgunov did not reply at once, but after some delay my request was granted, though only on condition that similar facilities should be granted to the representative of the Tass Agency in Rome. I do not believe that the Soviets had at heart any great interest in establishing a telephonic service for Tass in the Italian capital, but the stipulation was made for reasons of prestige. I telegraphed to Morgagni and to the Ministry of Culture urging them to accept this condition of a reciprocal arrangement. I know that the Ministry sent for the Tass correspondent and informed him of the agreement that henceforth he could communicate with Moscow without any check by the censor. The journalist must have been amazed at such unexpected generous treatment. The important point is that before Christmas I was able to inaugurate the new system, and thereafter the wheels ran perfectly smoothly.

Maria Leschinskaja was a perfect colleague. She translated

into English *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Komsomolskaja Pravda* and other newspapers which she had to buy early every morning, because notwithstanding their circulation of over 1,000,000 apiece (*Pravda* printed 2,500,000 copies) they were all gone in a few minutes. The endless queues of people in front of the newspaper kiosks formed a most extraordinary spectacle. Maria Leschinskaja was initiated by me into the craft of journalism, but alas, she was not able to impart to me in return a knowledge of the Russian tongue which I would have liked to acquire. I was barely able to acquire a knowledge of the most essential elementary things and only began to feel my way in deciphering inscriptions. But while I was trying to learn Russian, my colleague picked up Italian with an ease, an alertness and a speed that were truly amazing.

The Moscow newspapers were not impressive, consisting of from four to six pages, according to the day. I was constantly but vainly searching for any repercussion of the war in Europe. I never saw any comment on it, except when Yugoslavia was attacked, on which occasion the Soviet Press could not restrain itself and made some scathing remarks on the imperialism of the capitalistic powers which oppressed small undefended nations. With this exception, the echo of the European conflict was confined to a resumé of the German, British, Italian or Greek official bulletins, reported objectively on the last column of the last page in a sequence that changed from day to day in order to show strict impartiality.

The first three pages of each paper consisted of short articles with discussions on domestic politics. Pride of place was given to Stakhanovism. Indeed this Stakhanovism was an irritating and monotonous feature, which often left us incredulous, as when, for instance, *Pravda* upheld to public admiration a certain workman who had succeeded in producing an output of 450 per cent over that of his comrades. This, though we knew it not, was, according to *Pravda*, a very serious and important phenomenon. All this seemed to us then to be just Bolshevik propaganda, whereas to-day we see that Russia has saved herself in this war through Stakhanovism. When the second Five Year Plan was completed, Stalin pressed into

service "comrade worker Stakhanov" to rally the people of the Soviet Union to increase their production a hundred-fold through the intensified application of every individual worker, whether agricultural or industrial. For over five years, right up to the war, miners, collective farmers and factories underwent a tremendous strain. Production, production—nothing mattered but production. It seemed an obsession; production was verging on madness. In connection with this problem of production *Pravda* used to break out into ferocious articles against one commissar or another. Now it was in the field of iron metallurgy, now in that of mining, or of industry. *Pravda* was always detecting deficiencies, and laid responsibility for them on the shoulders of the officials in charge of the particular branches. If one of those uncompromising articles of criticism appeared in the official organ of the Party, on the following day all those at the head of the industrial concern in question, and often, too, the commissar as well as all his colleagues were dismissed. If for instance, in the "Kolkholz", which comprised collective agricultural organisations—a compromise between the big factory and an agrarian collegium—any slackness had been detected, if a hiatus in productive rhythm had been observed, the leaders of the Kolkholz were dismissed, if not, actually deported to Siberia. To remain in his job everybody had to give service to the maximum limit that was humanly possible.

The people of the Soviet Union had been trained to regard work as a religion. Women played their part in this religion of work, and by the beginning of 1936, out of the total number of workers in Moscow fifty-four per cent were women. It was on account of this that Stalin allowed women to have the same rights as men in all the fields of national, economic, administrative, cultural, social and political activity.

In the spring of 1939 Moscow alone had more than 2,500 great industrial enterprises, with a system that was completely American. Production figures leaped dizzily. The second economic plan, which was more far-reaching than the first, had produced formidable results, but those results were a

secret which could not be revealed. Neither bulletin nor statistics were ever published.

Now and then I discussed this feverish zest for work with Maria Leschinskaja, and compared it with the war that was rumbling outside the frontiers of Russia. I would turn on the radio and get my colleague to listen to the balance-sheets of war. Those were the days of the Battle of Britain, when Germany hoped by furious bombardment to crush the English. Wherever Germany turned she could not help winning; the British alone she could not succeed in frightening, and Hitler had not the courage to order an invasion of England.

Maria Leschinskaja, like all Russians, used to talk about the real Russia. "Look at the fruit of the madness of capitalism", she often remarked. "Capitalism is the struggle for the confiscation of the wealth of others. Capitalism means war, bloodshed, the execution of the working class and of the proletariat."

"On the other hand", she went on, in a proud and impassioned tone, "Russia under its father, Stalin, lives in perfect peace, and is marching onwards. Russia is an island of peace in the midst of a world of madmen."

I looked at Maria Leschinskaja, and asked her, "But don't you think that you too will one day be involved in the great conflict?"

"We? Why should we? Stalin will not let himself be infected by the madness of others. If others were to do this, it would be for the ruin of Russia, which is rich in natural resources; but what Stalin wants is the happiness of the Russian proletariat."

"Quite so. But cannot developments be anticipated?"

"Decidedly no. It is sufficient to be on our guard. Owing to this reason our Press is the most impartial in the whole world."

"Now listen to me. The moment will come when you will find Germany facing you with a number of claims. Hitler has an eye on your petrol."

"No, that would be an abominable idea. We have helped

Germany. We have concluded with her a most far-reaching and important commercial treaty."

"For all that——"

"Well, it is for this reason that we do not lead lives of idleness, and that we are toiling to be ready for every emergency."

Indeed, as far as I could see, all the frontiers were well guarded. Although there was no Stalin Line, nor a Voroshilov Line, nor a Timoshenko Line like the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line in the West, nevertheless they toiled to prepare a secure defence by sending troops to the west to the occupied regions in Poland, and in the north to the Soviet Republics in the Baltic. That winter Timoshenko took a precaution that Hitler failed to counter on his side, even though he was then planning an attack on Russia. Timoshenko gave orders for regional skiing marches. Every province had to send all its available young people of the Comsomol, the Kolkhoz, and the Syndicates across the snowy steppes to undertake collective marches of 2,000 kilometres. During the course of a whole winter month, when it was very many degrees below zero, millions of organised young men, burdened with heavy equipment, defied the torments of the Siberian winter climate. Simultaneously the Russian Army underwent field exercises.

In the meantime, it should be said, the Soviet Government studied every means for living on good terms with Germany. The German Ambassador, Schulenburg, was a very frequent caller on Molotov. He certainly saw him more frequently than did the American and British Ambassadors. In January was concluded a new commercial treaty, more far-reaching than the previous ones, the successful conclusion of which made the Germans very elated, for it ensured to Germany the fruits of an abundant Ukraine harvest as well as petroleum and mining products of all kinds, especially of manganese in return for German machine tools. Germany was the only country that had commercial representatives in Moscow and throughout the rest of the U.S.S.R. The hotels of the capital were packed with the delegates of German commercial commissions, who were in reality the agents of German economic espionage. The representative of the I. G. Farbe, the leading

German chemical company, had taken quarters in the Metropol, and was taking lessons in Russian. Another emissary from Berlin, a petrol agent, made extraordinary statements to me in the evenings, when he was full of alcohol. Germany, he claimed, had a right to her own share of the products of the oil wells of Baku, because these wells had been constructed by German engineers.

On the anniversary of the Revolution I watched the review on the Red Square from the island reserved for the diplomatic corps. The Army, Navy, and Red Air Arm were represented in the procession that paraded before our eyes. As they passed before Lenin's Mausoleum they raised their hands to the peaks of their caps in salute. Their magnificent bearing compared very favourably with that of the most up-to-date of European armies. I noticed large numbers of parachute divisions. Mammoth tanks rumbled with a great clatter of machinery over the macadamised surface of the Square. Squadrons of planes in geometrical patterns darkened the sky. I asked our military attaché what he thought of it all. He said that he thought that since Timoshenko had been made Commissar of War, Russia had made tremendous progress in armaments and in military instruction. Nobody, however, had been allowed to visit the great arms factories of which there were a dozen round Moscow—the Stalin factory, the Serp Molot factory, those of the Krasny Proletarians, etc. The military attaché was of the opinion that the Russians showed less than they actually possessed.

I saw Stalin in the group of Commissars in the Government box, with the aged Kalinin, the President of the Union, Voroshilov, Molotov, Beria, Mikojan, Schdanov, and Kaganovic. There was also Dimitrov, the Bulgarian who had led the Anti-Comintern. After my arrival in Russia I enquired into the fate of Litvinov, who, I took for granted, held some post of great responsibility. Instead of having got promotion, Litvinov had become a humdrum librarian in the Narkomindien, and, I believe, the distribution of the great *Soviet Encyclopaedia* which was in preparation under the direction of Potemkin, passed through his hands.

But at the moment all my attention was centred on Stalin. I tried to make a study of this man with the good-natured peasant face who had been able to make one single federation of twenty-seven republics of widely different races and utterly dissimilar in language. Stalin is the Georgian who, thirty years ago, was not only unable to speak Russian, but had never even seen the Russian printing characters. There is the same difference between Russian handwriting and Georgian—which looks like Arabic script written with a trembling hand—as there is between Etruscan and Greek writing. Now, a population of nearly 150,000,000 souls was compactly united, like a block of granite, under the guidance of this son of Caucasian soil, with the face of a peasant. Adopting the doctrine of Marx and Lenin, he had solved the age-old problem of welding together under his sole control heterogeneous races—the Slavs of White Russia, Ukrainian peasants, artisans of Arzebeijan, Armenian traders, Kurdish highwaymen, and Mongolian shepherds. Stalin held sway from the Arctic to the mountains of Persia, and from the frontiers of Central Europe to the Pacific. They obeyed him and also loved him. How much blood had been shed to cause this transformation of a Russia comprising many nations, once a hot-bed of discords and rebellion into a single federation of states which had embraced a Communist dogma and faith? It is worth while investigating this, as well as the mystery of the authority exercised by Stalin without need of the slightest force.

I got a ticket to attend the meeting of the Congress of the Nationalities, which is a kind of general assembly of the Union. The meeting was presided over by Kalinin; Stalin was in the second row of the statesmen. One orator succeeded another on the stage of the hall, each of them representing his own particular state. With the aid of the shorthand reports I succeeded in following to the best of my limited ability the evolution of the debate. The themes on which the speakers harped were the solidarity and discipline of the proletariat, their labours in the interests of the Soviet Union, and their struggle against capitalism. Each speech ended with a hymn

to Stalin to which he listened, sitting there absolutely immobile. The most strange feature of the meeting was that the audience consisted of delegates, both men and women, from the whole Union. It was obvious that there was a great variety of languages and dialects employed by the speakers, for when any individual speaker arose, they were not all able to follow him. The men had caps on their heads and were often reading papers, the women were knitting as if they were in their own homes. They were all there with the consciousness of a duty to be fulfilled.

I became more and more accustomed to the life of Moscow. To tell the truth, the great cold did not arouse in me a great desire to go out, but I had nevertheless to go every morning to the embassy to have my short conversation with the Ambassador on the news of the day, and occasionally to have a short chat with Signor Mascia, our legal attaché.

On October 28, Italy declared war on Greece, but the campaign went rather badly. Instead of going ahead, the Italians were held up and even forced to fall back. It is not pleasant, when you are living far away from your native land, to have to follow on the radio the reverses inflicted on your own country. Consequently we in Moscow had a feeling that we were daily treading on thorns during the Italian campaign against the Greeks. In the embassy this was the main theme of discussion—this and the mutual aerial bombardments of the Germans and the British. Apart from this there was not much to do, as Russian politics offered no incidents of sufficient interest to be worth recording. The Ambassador used sometimes to go out skiing with his dogs.

Nearly every evening we went to the theatre which was the chief source of amusement in Moscow. There were forty-seven theatres from which to choose, all very expensive, with first-rate programmes and starring artistes of world-wide repute. It is hard to realise what the Russian theatre is like. It is an ever-flowing spring of new emotions. Whether one went to hear a drama of Tchekoff staged by Nemirovski at the Kamerny Theatre, or to attend a work of Tchechovky in

the Lyric Theatre, or to hear Tiroff in the latest production of Alexj Tolstoi, or to the Jewish Theatre to hear *King Lear*, it was impossible not to admit that both the dramatic and lyrical arts had attained under the Soviet régime the highest level recorded in the experience of the theatre. I had the privilege of hearing a rendering of *La Locandiera* which will forever be impressed on my memory. In those days plays based on the French novels of the last century began to appear on the Russian stage. For instance there was a *Eugenie Grandet* and a *Madame Bovary* presented with very original and excellently developed artistic settings. Those present on both occasions comprised a proletarian audience which followed the development of the theme with the closest attention, and showed an intimate knowledge of the theatre.

One evening in the Metropol I made the acquaintance of an ex-colonel of the Russian army decorated with many medals. Like myself, he was watching a troupe of gipsy dancers giving a performance in the hotel lounge. He had been in Italy, and spoke of my country with great feeling. He mentioned that he had heard Mussolini speaking in the Piazza del Duomo, in Milan, and said with an air of conviction, "My friend, I am a Bolshevik, but mark my words. This man will never be a dictator—not even if he wants to be one. It takes a cynic to make a dictator, whereas your Mussolini is an actor."

Another interesting acquaintance was the agent of the G.P.U. who kept dogging my footsteps. As I was leaving the hotel one day we came face to face, and his eyes met mine, perhaps because he observed a slight touch of curiosity in my expression. His next move was a breach of the code prescribed for him by his superiors—he asked me in the most courteous manner if I was pleased to be in Moscow. There was no need for any mutual introductions. Custom had already made us familiar to one another—I the man who was shadowed, and he the shadower. I replied that Moscow would please me more if it were a little less cold. We continued our conversation walking side by side across Revolution Square and along other streets until we arrived at the Arbat.

"I fancy that you are aware that I belong to the G.P.U.," he said at length, after a brief exchange of commonplaces.

"Well, that is pretty obvious—isn't it?"

"But you are not the first man whom I have shadowed."

"I can well believe that what you say is true."

"What I mean to say is, that I have had to shadow other foreigners."

"Well?"

"But you are the first Italian I have had to deal with. Most of them were Germans. People who give one a lot of trouble."

"Trouble! In what way?"

"They know that they are under our observation, and take advantage of it, as though we were more than detectives—as though we were their guardian angels. Do you know what they do? Some of them, on leaving the hotel, look round the foyer, and refuse to put their noses outside the door, unless they are sure that we are following close at their heels. On one occasion I had left one of them for a little while to go to another part of the hotel. This German gentleman, to watch whom I had been assigned, instituted a hunt when he could not see me. When I turned up, he got very angry, and stated that he urgently needed to go somewhere or other, and that I must know that it was my duty to follow him, for he would not wait for my convenience. Anyone would have thought it was an officer speaking to a soldier. Even my own superior in the G.P.U. would not have been so overbearing. A taxi was waiting for him outside, but he would not get into it until I, feeling rather confused, had opened the door for him."

I struck up a kind of friendship with this man, the most courteous of all the detectives I have ever met. When he was on duty outside my room I used to call him inside, and give him something to warm him, either a cup of tea or a glass of whiskey. To show his thanks, he started placing my papers outside my door every morning. When Maria Lcschinskaja arrived as usual, he used to greet her as though she were a queen. I found both of them very touching in their little acts of attention to me—the G.P.U. man with his attitude suggestive of a faithful dog, and my secretary-translator who brought

me bunches of mimosa half wilting with frost, because she knew that I liked flowers in my room.

In the second half of November Molotov went to Berlin to return Ribbentrop's visit of 1939. The Germans gave great importance to this visit, because they were anxious to neutralise the impression created by the electoral campaign in the United States, which was proceeding very favourably for Roosevelt who was thoroughly detested in Germany. During the course of a banquet in honour of the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs the R.A.F. dropped bombs quite close to the palace in which the reception took place. A wordy warfare followed in the press of both countries.

Immediately after Christmas, Rome, which was all the time very much preoccupied about Greece, began to woo Moscow by wiring to Rosso to take the initiative in steps to bring about a commercial treaty. Italy had been the first European power to recognise the Union of the Soviet Republics after the Bolshevik revolution, yet she was the only one now on the Continent that did not enjoy any commercial advantages. Rosso went to Molotov at the behest of the Italian Government, and Molotov courteously informed him that the Government of the Soviet Union would be very glad to conclude an economic agreement if some issues in the political sphere were previously clarified. Moscow desired to know particularly Rome's attitude with regard to various Balkan problems, above all with regard to the Dardanelles. This last issue constituted a very delicate problem, because, as is well known, the U.S.S.R. demanded back her right to go through the Straits. Molotov had made the same demand to Berlin, but Berlin parried the question by declaring that it was one which concerned Italy more than Germany.

The reply from the Soviet Government did not seem so formidable that Rosso gave up all hope. He made a report to Ciano of his conversation with Molotov, adding a suggestion on his own account that a questionnaire should be submitted to the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, with a view to keeping negotiations open. For over two months no further sign of life came from Rome. Rosso made enquiries and

learned that the whole dossier, including his own suggestions, had been sent by Ciano to Berlin for consideration, but that the dossier had never been returned. That was why Ciano was unable to reply to Molotov.

In the beginning of March I had to go on personal business to Berlin, and Signor Rosso entrusted me with the task of speaking to Alfieri of his efforts, and of begging him to request the Wilhelmstrasse to define its attitude with regard to the question.

It only took a few minutes' conversation with Alfieri to realise that the document was lying forgotten in a pigeon-hole in Ribbentrop's office, and that he had no intention of rescuing it from its oblivion. Alfieri promised, however, to speak about it to the German Minister of Foreign Affairs. But even this did not make Ribbentrop release the important dossier. Alfieri told me to ask Rosso to have patience, as a new meeting between Hitler and Mussolini at the Brenner Pass was imminent, and the whole question would undoubtedly come under discussion at that meeting. Thus it turned out that right up to the outbreak of war with Russia Italy remained the only country that could neither export goods to nor import them from the Soviet Union, and that simply because the German Government did not want it. From Russia Italy would be able to get, in return for half-finished products, the metals needed for her war industries, manganese, asbestos, tungsten, etc., but Italy was in the hands of Germany, and Germany was determined to serve herself first, at her own absolute discretion.

This time, when I was in Berlin—and the visit lasted for a few days only—I heard rumours among the people for which I was not at all prepared, rumours which I considered as absolutely unfounded—of an imminent conflict between Germany and Russia. It struck me that the political atmosphere seemed incompatible with the menace of such an eventuality. The tone of the relations between Berlin and Moscow was of such a nature that it seemed to preclude all motives for a war. When the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Matsuoka, passed through Moscow on the return

from his visit to Berlin, among the notabilities who were at the station to greet him was Stalin, who during the few minutes while he was waiting for the arrival of the train, approached the German military attaché, and taking his arm in his own, said to him, "My dear friend, our two countries get along together wonderfully—don't you think so?" The extreme courtesy of this gesture had led the representatives of the German Press to devote whole columns to emphasising the closeness of the Germano-Soviet friendship. After this, Dekanosov, formerly a vice-commissary, a man of very great influence, was sent as ambassador of the Soviets to Berlin. Why, after all this, should there be a war? Well, the line of reasoning which the people of Berlin followed on the question was that Hitler needed the Ukraine and the Caucasus for supplies. Russia would decidedly not give him those territories; therefore, he would have to seize them. The contention was so absurd that I regarded it just as mere hyperbole. Remember, this was in March, barely three months before the conflict.

On my return to Moscow, I related what I had heard. There were lengthy discussions on the subject, even among the German residents in Moscow, but everybody expressed the view that it was merely a foolish alarm generated by the nervous excitement of Berlin folk, who were obliged to lead the hellish existence of an almost nightly recurrence of aerial attacks.

Even Maria Leschinskaja, the ex-colonel of the Russian Army, and my friend the G.P.U. agent, had heard these rumours going the rounds, and were just a trifle alarmed. However, as nothing happened, and, as the Moscow Press continued to take no notice of the war, we ceased to talk about the subject.

Towards the end of April I fell ill. Maria Leschinskaja and the manageress of my floor in the hotel did all they could to help me. I was attended by the doctor sent to me by Burobin, and a change of air was prescribed. He was in favour of sending me to the Crimea, but I decided to ask the Stefani Agency to transfer me to Rome. I had been in Moscow for

eight months, and had the climate not been so inclement in winter and so oppressive in summer, I would gladly have remained there for another couple of years. I had not made many friends in Russia, but the few I had I liked. Balgunov looked rather sad when I told him that I was going. Rosso and the other members of the Embassy cheered me with their kindly words. Rosso actually wrote to the Ministry, explaining why I left Moscow, and his remarks were indeed flattering. I regretted parting with Shapiro, who had been a good colleague to me. I was sorry to have to leave Russia with its fascinating problems. I had not been able to grasp them in their entirety. Russia has so many strange and mysterious facets, some of which I had observed; the greatest and most inexplicable mystery was, and still is, this harmonious blending of such an enormous number of individuals so that they form only one soul, swayed and impelled by one sole driving force.

I instituted a comparison in my mind between the three dictatorships, a Bolshevik, which had lasted already for twenty-three years, a Fascist, which had not reached its twentieth year as yet, and a Nazi with only eight years behind it. Of the three, the only one that had actually created a really new generation was the Bolshevik. It was the only one that had succeeded in permeating the atmosphere of the nation; the others had many aspirations, but had achieved no tangible results. To-day, the only one of the three régimes that has unwaveringly held its ground, that has created the miracle of Stalingrad, and will reach its goal—the end of the war—unscathed, is the Soviet. Whatever the Nazis may say, Stalin has to-day a greater ascendancy in Russia than Hitler has in Germany. He has not been obliged to dismiss one of his generals, whereas Hitler has shifted a great many of his during the course of five years.

I left for Italy on May 31, which was my birthday. Three weeks after my departure, another war front, the Eastern, had developed in Europe. The views of the Berlin mob had proved prophetic.

The insane crime which Hitler perpetrated in unleashing a war upon the Soviet Union will never be explained. Even

Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, when discussing the matter with a colleague, declared: "Ich halte es eine Irrtum" ("I think it was a mistake"). Russia had done nothing to provoke Germany. As in the case of Poland, Norway, Belgium, France and Jugoslavia, the provocation had come from Berlin, and it had been premeditated. The Nazi contention that Bolshevism was preparing to invade Europe was false, but even granting that Soviet Bolshevism was contemplating such a plan, it would have had to wait for a long time before putting it into operation. In that summer of 1941 Europe was not so enfeebled that it could become a prey to Bolshevism. Even to-day Europe is sufficiently defended by its traditions and its conservative spirit, against any invasion, even an ideological invasion, coming from the East. I am not one of those who believe in world Bolshevism.

But in 1941 Stalin's Russia was very far from dreaming of a war, as all those who had been in that country then can confidently assert. Russia had barely limited herself to the taking of precautionary steps. In her inmost soul she was afraid of Germany, because Germany was a dangerous and an uneasy enemy. It was impossible for a nation to feel perfectly tranquil when its frontiers marched with Germany's, especially when one took into consideration the mode of approach beloved by Hitler. Germany had become a colossus that could not be challenged lightly, unless there was a sea between her and her enemy, as in the case of Great Britain. Without the support of a solid coalition, Russia would not have been able to take the field against such a colossus, and in the summer of 1941 she had no such coalition. It was Hitler, in my opinion, who revealed to Soviet Russia her actual strength by the war which he let loose on her. The military potentiality of the Russians was discovered by the Russians themselves in their life-and-death struggle, when, armed with all their fanaticism and marshalling all their energy, they succeeded, first in halting, and later in repelling the enemy. In coping with the danger, Stalin's Russia acquired a knowledge of her strength, and that knowledge she owed to the head of Nazi Germany. In affirming that he wanted to be the saviour of

the Continent from the menace of Bolshevism, Hitler enabled Bolshevism to march victoriously towards the West.

Hitler allowed himself to be deluded by the hope of gaining great and sweeping results by a surprise attack. It is impossible that he should not have reflected on the vastness of the territory which he would have to overrun with his war-machines. Russia is not Norway—neither is it France. For thousands and thousands of miles it stretches astride two continents—a vast region traversed by the mightiest rivers in Europe. Nature was all against such an undertaking. For once Hitler indulged in a dream like the dream of Icarus. He banked solely on one possibility, and that was that Stalin's régime might collapse at the first blow.

Last summer I met a German politician who assured me that Hitler had completely changed his mind with regard to Russia. He had thought that he could pluck the plant by a simple and speedy sleight of hand. Now he knows that he made a mistake, and would be glad to remedy the damage by a separate peace. But it is too late. The price he would have to pay would be not merely the Ukraine, nor the handing back of all regions now occupied by him within the Russian frontiers—it would be something far more important. Russia would demand the abjuration of National Socialism and permission for the resurrection of Communism in Germany. This is a far heavier price than the surrendering of all the territories Hitler has seized and the renunciation of the purpose for which he began his struggle in 1919.

But even if he were now prepared to make such a renunciation, it is too late.

Chapter IX

THE RETURN OF THE ARGONAUT

WHEN I listened in daily from Moscow, I followed with breathless anxiety the developments of our campaign in Greece. I had no idea of what a tragedy was being enacted. Fortunately for Italy, at the very last moment a remedy was found, as otherwise who can say in what a catastrophe the "great enterprise" would have ended.

I have already pointed out how Mussolini felt dissatisfied and frustrated after Italy's insignificant share in the war against France. When Hitler forbade Italy to occupy Corsica and Tunis, the Duce felt like a dethroned King, or anyhow realised that he had been deprived of his rights, and had lost prestige. He was tormented by envy at the sight of Hitler with his colossal spoils of war and his gigantic power in Europe, while all that Italy had been able to secure were certain narrow strips of territory from the French Riviera to Modane. The German soldier in the occupied territories had every right to be proud of his own conquests; he could stroll about as a conqueror in the Bois de Boulogne, where he was regarded with timid respect by the subject people. On the other hand the Italian soldier in Modane, in Antibes and in the villages of Savoy, who was called upon for garrison duty alongside the German soldier, was boycotted by the French, inasmuch as he did not represent actual power in their eyes.

Mussolini tried to secure for himself some successes in Africa, seeing that he could do nothing better. In obedience to his orders Marshal Graziani succeeded in breaking through the Egyptian frontiers and driving on past them with his army, in a thrust that gave hopes of a successful advance to Alexandria. Graziani's blow kept alive for a spell the waning ardour of the Fascist jingoes, who claimed that he had performed a miracle. Mussolini reckoned that by the occupation of Egypt he would make up for what he had previously been obliged to forego

in accordance with the desire of his ally. But his hopes proved illusory. Graziani could not keep up his advance, because the army had no water. An aqueduct had to be constructed regardless of cost along the coast to the foremost of the occupied regions, as otherwise it would have been impossible to drive forward in the direction of the course of the Nile and the heart of Egypt. Before the aqueduct was finished, the English under Wavell started a counter-attack.

All these military actions had the stamp of improvisation. Mussolini had neglected details of organisation. For instance, he should have known that in the desert it was impossible to advance against a powerful enemy without any tanks whatsoever, and with an army that lacked water supplies. He himself was the supreme director of operations, with the negligible co-operation of Cavallero, his Under-Secretary of War. The General Staff were not consulted. A dilettante in this domain as in all others, Mussolini had never given a thought to organisation, which is the most essential pre-requisite for all military enterprise.

The consequence was that by the middle of October, 1940, Italy was paralysed along the various war sectors, partly as the result of political pacts, partly owing to the difficulties of terrain, and partly owing to the stubborn resistance of the enemy. The participation of Italy in the war was still utterly unproductive of results.

Those who know Mussolini can imagine him as treading on burning coals. In the event of the war finishing suddenly, as it might do from day to day, Italy's spoils would have been just a handful of flies. Apropos of flies, a story went the rounds of Italy. Mussolini, so the tale ran, arrived in a small town in the vicinity of Naples which was plagued with flies. He promptly sent for the local mayor and the political secretary, and harangued them thus: "I have observed with astonishment that no attention is paid to my orders. You know that I gave orders that war was to be declared on flies throughout all Italy. Why have you not done so?" To which the unfortunate municipal officials replied: "Duce, we obeyed your orders. Your war was promptly started. But the flies won."

This silly story is illustrative of the genesis of Mussolini's sudden interest in Greece earlier in the war and the circumstances which led to his premeditated attack on that country. But there was no lack of people who took steps to fan the spark into a blaze. General Visconti Prasca, the commander of our military garrison in Albania, was subsequently accused of having sent false reports about the defensive preparations of the Greeks. But Ciano, the Cabinet Minister, and Jacomoni, the Governor of Albania, who regarded this territory as their own dominion and their own private reserve, the annexation of which to Italy had been their work for the most part, strove to assure Mussolini that the campaign against Greece would be an extremely easy one. Jacomoni said that he had bribed two generals of the Greek army who assured him that in the event of an attack by Italy no resistance would be offered. In the Roman Government offices it was said that Metaxas had fallen in with this arrangement, whereas the idea never so much as occurred to him.

The result of the inquiry set on foot by Mussolini about the possibility of an action in which Greece would lose, gave rise to a wave of optimism in official Roman circles. If it were true that a section of the Greek army would not fight and that Greek armaments were of an inferior type, then instead of going to war the whole campaign would be a picnic. Five divisions ought to be sufficient. When arranging the tactical plan for the offensive, Cavallero did not exceed what was considered the maximum of five assault divisions.

But the actual situation was different. The Greeks were resolved to defend their own land. None of their generals showed the faintest indication that he wished to go over to the Italian side, either alone or with his troops. On the contrary, the Greeks without exception fought with the desperation and courage that are inspired by a fight for independence. Visconti Prasca was recalled immediately, and Jacomoni, the Governor, followed him soon after.

Hostilities began on October 29, 1940. Our most advanced positions were held by the Julia and Bari divisions, which,

after crossing the river Kalamas, were about to thrust forward some kilometres into Greek territory as far as Mezzovo. This was on the first day of the attack, when they were able to take advantage of the surprise of the enemy. But after two days the Italians realised what an enormous mistake they had made in deeming that the campaign would be extremely easy. The Greek army not only fought fiercely, but consisted of twenty-nine complete divisions, while their Italian assailants had only five. Furthermore, the Greek war material was very modern, and was almost all of foreign manufacture, having been bought in England, in America and even in Germany. The Greek infantry had been given American machine-guns of the latest pattern. As had been the case with the Abyssinians so it was now with the Greeks. The Italians found themselves confronted with guns made in the Krupp factories. If the Greek armaments showed any defect it was in the supplies of shells, many of which were duds; furthermore the commissariat in the early phase of the struggle was somewhat deficient. But, apart from these drawbacks, the Greek army was homogeneous, disciplined and prepared.

Under a torrential downpour, which made quagmires of the already very bad mountain roads, the Italians had to fall back after their first contact with the enemy. The Greeks were following three routes, one seaward in the direction of Valona where they could make a stout stand, one in the middle of the battle-front, in the valley of Vojussa, where Greek forces reached Tepelini in Albania, and another on the summit of Corizza, in the most mountainous part of the region. Instead of our threatening the enemy, it was the enemy who advanced in territory that belonged to the Italians. The situation was one of utter topsy-turvydom. Had it not been for her infantry, Italy would have been exposed to the menace of a Greek invasion.

The Italian divisions held their ground desperately, facing as best they could the onset of absolutely superior forces. The enemy profited by their advantageous position to improve steadily their own organisation, while they remedied the

shortage of provisions and other drawbacks. It was the courage of the Italian soldiers that saved Albania which, by the end of November, might have perished irretrievably. But the Greeks made the most of their advantage, and showed that they did not want to let it slip from their hands. Their dash was reminiscent of the Greek insurrection which went on through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the heroism of Missolonghi. They seemed possessed by the warrior spirit of their ancient stock which had been displayed in scores of fierce battles for the defence of their country.

And what about our Italian men? They had almost all been mobilized at the very last moment in the army and the Fascist militia, some of them belonging to both organisations. They had not been prepared even morally for this ordeal. One fine day they had embarked at Brindisi and Bari, amid an appalling muddle of orders and counter-orders. They were told that they were going to occupy Greece, but not to fight. They had not been provided with change of clothing, and what they were wearing, although new, was of the worst quality. The issuing of clothes at the mobilization centres had been carried out in a very slipshod manner. Soldiers were seen with tunics and breeches that did not match, and were made of different fabrics, and the quartermasters had neglected to supply every soldier with his complete equipment. Their boots were soaked and let in water in the downpour which greeted them on their arrival in Greece.

The fate which was to befall the Germans after their first offensive in Russia, overtook the Italians in the Greek campaign. The High Command had not reckoned upon fighting in winter, for Mussolini had assured them that the military operations would be of very brief duration. All the consequences of this tragic lack of foresight in face of the rigours of winter had therefore to be endured. The men were short of overcoats, and even of anti-frostbite ointment—a thing which was very urgently needed. There was an ever-increasing number of cases of frostbite in the Italian army. Snow fell early in the mountains of Albania, and the hospitals began to

fill. Hundreds of amputations had to be carried out. Then an epidemic of typhus began to spread like wildfire.

So great was the general disorganisation that it frequently happened that a section of a battalion was already in Albania while its baggage, along with the transport mules and the equipment for the men, were still in Bari, waiting to be shipped. And all this time the enemy were drawing nearer and nearer to Argirocastro. The greater part of the mobilized divisions lacked the necessary means of transport. It was mountain warfare that was being waged, with roads none of which could be negotiated by motor vehicles; without the mules and the battalion carts the divisions were, so to speak, unable to move. Some of these military roads consisted merely of tracks, usable only by rickety Albanian handcarts. Consequently it was impossible to send in advance motor transport of any type. The guns had to be taken to pieces before being despatched to the front-line, and it was a stroke of luck that the Skoda gun-carriages had been reconditioned in time. But there were howitzers and mortars that were unusable simply owing to shortage of ammunition. A hopelessly inadequate issue of fifty rounds for every gun had been made, but the gunners could not always be sure even of this.

An army constantly falling back is always in a state of psychological and moral inferiority. The roles in Greece had been completely reversed. The attacking Italians found that they were being attacked. There was a corresponding inevitable change in the spirits of the troops. They were discouraged, and lack of discipline inevitably ensued. In these circumstances the soldier's attitude underwent a change; they began to lose confidence in their officers.

Our men began to grumble that the apparent failure of the campaign was all due to Mussolini. But it was not Mussolini alone that was cursed by the rank and file of the Julia and the other divisions, they also cursed everything connected with Fascism. Stories passed from mouth to mouth in the trenches about Fascist hierarchs who were steadily filling their pockets and waxing fat on the profits secured by the sufferings caused by a badly-planned war, the purpose of which nobody under-

stood. The men pretended not to notice when they were visited at the front by Ciano and Starace, the secretary of the Party, by the Minister of Corporations, by Ricci, the former head of the Fascist Youth and by Teruzzi, the commander of the militia. Having taken note of the chilly reception with which they were greeted, those bigwigs did not repeat their visits. The men, incidentally, had observed that some of the Fascist leaders indulged in large-scale speculations by buying at Bari cases of mouldy and putrid preserves in order to sell them as food for the mobilized army. Other speculators made deals in woollen blankets for the troops. Anybody staying in Rome could see countless instances of the corruption of the Party hierarchs.

For all these reasons those Blackshirts who took part in the campaign were detested by their comrades, and held up to general ridicule, because they represented the Party—the cause of all the trouble. The men of the Blackshirt battalions were contemptuously referred to as “the chimney-sweepers”, on account of the black shirts which they wore under their grey-green uniforms. The ordinary soldiers who had been called up for service, saw in them the pampered sons of the detested “Party”, which was bringing the country to ruin. These feelings were rendered still more bitter when it was observed that in every regiment there were Fascists affiliated to the Ovla—the secret police. Sometimes the Ovla official was a sergeant or a corporal, and everybody knew that he was there to spy on the attitude of officers and soldiers, listening to what was said and duly reporting it. But, as has always been the case where Ovla is concerned, those who ought to have been on their guard and apprehended lest information should be lodged against them, did not trouble to take any precautions, and said whatever came into their minds, with utter indifference to the spies. The Ovla has never succeeded in making for itself that atmosphere of dreaded authority which envelops the G.P.U. in Russia and the Gestapo in Germany. Its agents did their work too openly and with such utter incompetence that they could be easily spotted. They were, one might say, comic-opera secret

police. When he came upon a glaring case of "defeatism", based on grumbings and protests against Fascism, one of these secret agents delivered this ultimatum to the delinquent: "When we return to Italy, I will denounce you!"

The hatred of the Blackshirts was not always justified. Even among them there were reservists and recruits, who fought and some of whom fell in battle. It happened sometimes that certain elements among the Fascist Militia joined the chorus of criticism and malediction of the "hounds in the Government" who had proclaimed such an absurd war.

After 1940, that is, from the time when Mussolini decided to take part in the war, the Blackshirts was no longer a voluntary, but a compulsory form of service. In local Fascist circles the Party secretary received an order to urge as many of the members of the Party as possible to join the Militia. Many gave their names through fear, but it must not be thought that this was a proof of cowardice. The local Fascist administrator had, as a matter of fact, jurisdiction over the entire economic life of the city and imposed his will even on private concerns, arranging for dismissals and promotions and for the transference of people who were disliked, to make way for more favoured individuals. These administrators could bring families to ruin. Their powers of coercion began with their right to force industrial concerns to contribute to the Fascist funds, as well as to compel all families to buy the Party almanac as a proof of their loyalty to Fascism.

So it was that later on those who were actually called up as reservists to the army began to realise that even their "chimney-sweep" colleagues might consider themselves as poor devils who were victims of aggression and political blackmail. In this way a greater camaraderie evolved between the two groups.

In December Marshal Pietro Badoglio resigned his post as chief of the General Staff. He had been opposed to the Abyssinian War; he had likewise been opposed to meddling in Spain, as well as to this madcap campaign in Greece. In the depth of his soul he had been always anti-Fascist and had regarded Mussolini as a whimsical and dangerous dilettante

who would eventually bring Italy to a tragic end. For some years the General Staff existed only in name. It was an institution that could not be abolished, by reason of the Constitution, but it continued to exist merely in order that every military decision made by the Duce might have the appearance of legality. The tactical plans were elaborated by the Government, and it was Mussolini who made final decisions. The Fabriguerra, that is to say, the central office for war production, which was under the control of General Favagrossa, ought logically to have had direct contact with the office of the chief of the General Staff, but actually it was under the absolute control of the Duce. No communications were any longer made to the General Staff with regard to military preparations, and anything that the General Staff succeeded in learning about such matters was the result of its own special inquiries. Mussolini knew that he had an opponent in Badoglio, and for this reason he always tried to shelve him by placing more pliable generals over him. In this way he gave to Graziani precedence during the operations in Libya, knowing his rivalry with Badoglio. The Italians tended more and more, as time went on, to talk of Pietro Badoglio as the man who personified anti-Fascist ideas, and one day would be able to rescue the country from the path to ruin along which Mussolini was leading it.

The Greeks had, meanwhile, consolidated their conquests in Albania by the occupation of Argirocastro and Corizza. It was feared that they might reach Valona and bring about a complete collapse of the Italian expedition. To avert this disaster our resistance in the sector bordering on the sea was intensified while awaiting the arrival of reinforcements.

Rumours went around that Hitler had offered his assistance and that Mussolini had declined to accept any help, at any rate until our troops had succeeded in regaining the ground they had lost as far as the frontiers of Albania. There is no proof whatsoever that such an offer was made. Mussolini had started this war on his own initiative, with the intention that it should be an exclusive Italian enterprise, without any co-operation from his ally. He hoped thereby to restore to a

certain degree equilibrium in the heart of the Axis, which had been interrupted by the fact that Germany had appropriated to herself all the glory and all the advantages accruing from the victory over France. The balance of the Axis needed a certain amount of readjusting, as it had tilted too much towards its German component. For this reason the campaign in Greece had been undertaken practically without the cognizance of Berlin, as the first communication relative to it was made to Hitler at a new meeting at the Brenner Pass, just as the Italian forces were starting for Greece.

This was the revenge Mussolini took for having been kept in the dark on several occasions by the Fuehrer when deliberations on grave issues were being held. With an enthusiasm and pride typically Italian when a decision has been arrived at to do something to enhance national prestige, Mussolini made the campaign in Greece his own special enterprise and the test of the ardour of Fascism. It can easily be realised that he did not desire to be regarded as one who had to be rescued from a perilous enterprise, as one who, having committed a blunder, needs the intervention of others to get out of a nasty mess.

The first set-back which the Greeks suffered was when they started a new violent offensive by putting in the front line their Cretan divisions. In addition to Cretans this comprised a large number of Greek intellectuals, who had volunteered in the spirit in which Lord Byron volunteered, for the cause of Greek independence. The attack was launched in the middle of February, 1941, and found the Italians determined to die rather than yield any further ground. The attack was repulsed, and the Cretan division was literally mown down. It was a very dramatic moment, for if the Greeks had succeeded in breaking our lines, they would most certainly have driven on to Valona, and Albania would have been lost.

By a stroke of good luck for the Italians, after encountering countless difficulties and complications reinforcements succeeded in getting in contact with the front-line. The weeks which followed this lucky Italian defensive action were

uneventful and inactive. The war had developed into one of positions owing to the special nature of the mountainous ground and the intense cold that had set in.

On March 6 Mussolini turned up at the front to revive the drooping spirits of his soldiers. During the preparations for this visit the extent to which certain commanders had been guilty of doing little or nothing to facilitate the tasks of the troops was revealed. Wishing to give the Duce the impression that everything was done in accordance with regulations, and that there was no remissness to complain of, installations that had not existed until then, were set up in the few days that preceded the arrival of the Duce, and a number of steps were taken to camouflage the fact that the men had been obliged to lead an existence full of privations and sufferings. Hospitals were erected, whole villages of military huts were run up, shelters were built for the ammunition which had hitherto been allowed to deteriorate in the damp weather, defective weapons were got rid of, and every soldier was trained to take up his post promptly and be ready to show the Duce that a fighting spirit and a splendid morale pervaded the front line. Those reservists who had made themselves obnoxious by their turbulent bearing, their grumbles and generally unorthodox attitude towards the régime, were removed from office and sent to prison for the time being.

It is hard to realise that even then there were some soldiers who had stuck up photographs of Mussolini on the walls behind their bunks, and prodded them with their own bayonets. There were numerous instances of bitter dislike of Fascism and even of revolt against it, and these were so serious that they caused grave concern to commanding officers. The military censors had confiscated a number of letters sent by soldiers to their families in which the actual situation at the front was crudely portrayed and emphasised by expressions that were anything but respectful towards the régime and its head.

Did Mussolini learn about all this? Did he ever get to know the attitude of the soldiers whose blood he ordered to be shed to gratify his whim? I hold that he did not. It was nothing

new that the general secretaries of the Party, the ministers and the presidents of the confederations, should habitually hide the truth from him. The great dictator was left severely alone. They let him enjoy his idyll with his Claretta, who actually even appointed and sacked the Duce's secretaries. In view of his mania for wanting to work in co-operation with Hitler, nobody dared to contradict him. The campaign in Greece might well be termed an expedition of Argonauts which had its origin in, and was maintained by, a colossal system of trickery.

Mussolini's visit to the front was rendered necessary because the ship of Empire was leaking in all her joints. In Abyssinia the English had pushed their advance right up to Addis Abbaba, and the Viceroy, the Duke of Aosta, had been forced to make a last desperate resistance in Eritrea. In the African desert the British under Wavell had started a counter-offensive, and on February 7 they had occupied Benghazi. Everything was going to wreck and ruin. Nor did Italians succeed in advancing in Greece, in spite of the reinforcements that were sent; on the contrary they fell back there too. Mussolini believed that by his presence he could galvanize with new energy the weary and demoralised fighting troops. From the moment he acquired power he was never able to rid himself of the illusion that he was adored by the humble and ignorant masses, the simple workers, the sons of the people. If he had seen the bayonets and daggers piercing his effigies in the soldiers' quarters, and the scrawls of "To hell with Mussolini!" on the walls, he would have been more reserved in forming his judgments.

Finally there came his famous speech—it was bound to come—urging the Italians to make a supreme effort to hurl the Greeks into the Hellespont. In this speech he pre-emptorily demanded a victory. The army would have to give of its best, and even more than its best. He would hold the generals responsible for failure to attain success. Yet barely a month before he delivered this speech eleven drunken Greek soldiers, who had turned up at our trenches in one sector in the front line with a view to surrendering, found our men so

discouraged and in such a pessimistic mood that they thought that these eleven deserters had come to make an attack. When the Greeks said that they wanted to surrender, the Italian sentinels replied, "No! It is we who have had enough of this war!"

But the enemy were exhausted too. In some six months of heavy fighting during wintry weather they had done all they could and had called up the very last reserves. The help from the Allies which they had requested had come too late, at a crisis when the Greeks found that they had to fight against two enemies—the Italians on the Albanian front, and the Germans who, in April, came up from Thrace and Yugoslavia. The Greeks had entertained high hopes of help from Yugoslavia, but Yugoslavia collapsed before the German threat. Germany's war against Yugoslavia, which started on April 6, ended like a flash of lightning, showing once more that no obstacle was of any avail against the armed might of the Reich. Some days before Yugoslavia collapsed, Mussolini once again addressed the Italian people on the occasion of the anniversary of the establishment of the Fasci di Combattimento and declared, "Now comes the War!" At that precise moment the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Matsuoka, was making a round of visits to the capitals of the member states of the Tripartite Pact, and his arrival in Rome was imminent. The Italian people associated those two incidents in their minds, and with their inexhaustible sense of humour found sardonic amusement in the caustic epigram, "Now comes the War! Now comes Matsuoka!"

The general Italo-German attack was unleashed on the morning of April 12. The Greeks put up a strenuous defence, but were forced to fall back, this time with great precipitation, losing a great deal of their territory. In the last weeks of the war about 50,000 British troops came to their aid, but they were promptly engaged in battle with the Germans in the vicinity of Thermopylae, and were forced to embark at the Piræus, and make a final effort at resistance in the island of Crete.

On April 14 the Greek commander asked for an armistice,

but he applied to the Germans, forgetting the Italians, as a final dramatic insult, exactly as France had done. Later on Greece was obliged to make a truce with us also. So ended a campaign which, according to Mussolini's expectation, should have added lustre and glory to the great Italian Empire. Instead of this glorious culmination, there was nothing but a long series of painful and humiliating incidents which very nearly culminated in irreparable disaster. But the Italian soldier, although he was looked upon as a beast of burden and treated as one, and although he was dejected and exhausted, devoted himself with all his energy to the fulfilment of his duty, and his courage was as outstanding as it had always been in all previous and subsequent wars. He could not give more than he actually gave. He found himself facing a determined and valiant enemy whom he did not hate.

Though not convinced of the righteousness of his cause, he fought with desperation for the honour of his country. Any definite successes obtained were due to the Italian soldier—not to Mussolini nor to Fascism. While Fascism thought that it was proclaiming its own power to the world, and was attaining a success that was due to itself, in the long run it had to fall back on its ally, Germany, and thereby prove its own organic weakness. The bankruptcy of Fascism was revealed on the battle-fields of Greece.

Fascism did not even succeed in developing a moral mobilization in the country in connection with the war in Greece. Throughout Italy the people looked on this adventure in Greece as a comic affair, starting with its not very brilliant opening and the ridiculous mistake that had been made of believing that the Greek general was in the pay of Fascism. The nation was amused by this incredible Fascist ingenuousness. It was as though Mussolini and Fascism, looking at themselves through a distorting mirror, had seen their own silhouettes puffed out to gigantic stature. Fascism and Fascists were in reality of grotesque pigmy proportions when compared with colossal events in Europe.

The Italian people, who, though at war, still retained their

neutral outlook, did not analyse the ethics of this war, and did not pay much heed to it even in those moments when they realised that the most terrible and irreparable damage was being perpetrated. It was Mussolini's war, not theirs. It was only the bombardments of the big cities of the peninsula that roused them from their drowsy indifference. Before their cities were bombed the Italian people regarded themselves as living on the outer perimeter of the great conflict, in which Germany figured as the protagonist, followed by Mussolini who made a great noise and was anxious to have his own share in the glory.

But the Duce had a bitter awakening from his dreams of glory on May 19 when the Duke of Aosta was obliged to capitulate at Amba Alagi. In Italian East Africa Italian soldiers displayed all their traditional valour. They resisted and fought like lions to save the honour of the flag. But it was of no avail; it seemed as though fate had assigned to the Italian soldier the task of atoning with his own blood for the appalling blunders committed by Mussolini.

When I returned to Rome from Moscow, I saw that it was still the same old Rome. Nothing could disturb the Olympian calm and the fatuous conceit of all grades of officialdom—cabinet ministers, confederations, managing directors, newspaper editors—in short all circles in political and executive Rome. Mussolini's romance at Monte Mario still continued, and people looked on it as an established affair. Wags used to say that in front of the house where the Duce and his mistress used to meet was the inscription "Institute of Fascist Mysticism". To grasp the import of this joke the reader may be reminded that Fascism had actually established an Institute of Mysticism for the education of youth, in which instance the term mysticism implied the political religion of the Party.

Everybody talked about the fabulous wealth of the Ciano family. Old Ciano had died, leaving Galeazzo in control of his immense fortune. He was free to act like a Borgia pope—possessed of great wealth and with an enormous following of

relatives and favourites. Henceforth Ciano took very little interest in politics, for the Duce was intent on following his own whims and listened only to the voice of Berlin. Ciano had gone over, at least in a doctrinaire sense, to the opposition. There were rumours about stormy scenes between father-in-law and son-in-law; and this was aggravated when Signora Petacci came on the scene as a further factor for a cleavage between the two.

Bocchini, head of the police department, was also dead, and his place had been taken by Senice, his former colleague. It was said that Bocchini's power was unlimited. But he was not the type of man whom Mussolini could fear as a competitor. Bocchini was a prodigy in mnemonics. People said that you had only to mention any name whatsoever in his presence—even the name of a complete stranger—and he would reel off stories about him and strange happenings in his life. Several attempts on Mussolini's life had been foiled by the prompt intervention of Bocchini, who was always well informed and alert.

Edda Mussolini-Ciano was no Penelope. People used to wonder what sort of union there could be between her and Galeazzo when they began to lead completely separate existences. Edda was always intent on going her own way and amusing herself as she pleased. She was seen in Capri at least twice a year in quest of stimulating emotions—not the emotions which the marvellous landscape of Capri offers, but the emotions which a capricious and extravagant woman indulges in when she has complete liberty of action. Edda liked to revert from time to time to the bold and daring thrills of primitive existence. Perhaps she wished to emulate the mysterious caprice of the sirens who hid behind the reefs on moonlit nights and beguiled the sailors with their songs.

In Rome the crowd of idle snobs continued to loaf up and down the Via Veneto. There, in front of the confectionery shops and the florists, on the slope leading to Porta Pinciana and Villa Borghese they hob-nobbed—a strange blend of country gentlemen, German cinema artists who had come to

work in the Cinecittà Studios, decayed Roman aristocrats, politicians, and best-selling novelists. There they met and exchanged tit-bits of the latest scandal. At first endless rows of little tables used to be placed on the side-walk of Via Veneto, to permit some of these idlers to loaf through whole afternoons, but one day a group of students who had been called up for service were filled with rage as they saw them. Taunts and fisticuffs were exchanged, and the police were obliged to have the tables removed.

After a time the economic life of the country began to feel the repercussions of the war. Not that much notice was taken of it, but food supplies were not up to the standard of twelve months before. The Italian is not a big eater, but he develops an appetite when his cupboard is beginning to run out of food. Although they had less to sell than previously, the shops had plenty of money, as they looked for a threefold increase on peace-time profits. Hotel porters offered to secure for wealthy and powerful clients all kinds of commodities that could not be bought in the open market, especially coffee, perfumes and foreign cigarettes. Prices were, of course, a very secondary consideration. These greedy clients of the black marketeers were either bigwigs of the Party, business men paying a brief visit to Rome, or strangers to the country with their wallets full of foreign money. I believe that the sleeping car companies and the air traffic companies never worked so hard as during this period. There was a constant coming and going to the capital of strangers who were noted for their extravagant spending. But it was the last phase of a relative and ephemeral prosperity. After some time there were more intensive restrictions, and it was no longer an easy matter to book a berth in a wagon-lit unless you paid at least three times its actual price.

On my way to Rome I passed through Milan, which made a more definite impression on me. It was obviously more conscious of the war and its discomforts. But what a changed Milan it was! The well-known atmosphere of comfort, strife, conquest and victorious achievement which made the beloved city an example not only to Italy, but to a considerable part

of Europe, seemed now forced to struggle with obstacles and difficulties. Factories were unable to work full time through lack of raw materials. Industrial concerns were suffering from the ankylosis of the war. Industrialists were obliged to go to Rome to beg the Government for money and import permits, and frequently succeeded only by slipping a few thousand lira notes into the hands of subordinate state officials. Nobody could distinguish the border-line between the lawful and the unlawful. On the other hand, some industrialists had their factories closed and their workmen standing idle, though at the end of the week they came to demand their pay, as was but just. It was impossible to dismiss members of staff and the closing down of establishments was prohibited by law. It was necessary to "come to an arrangement"—a term the implication of which the Italian knows very well, because, it is the only means of escape when life becomes a puzzle too difficult to solve. Men in the trenches who cannot get the bare necessities of life "come to an arrangement"; employees who cannot bring home the wherewithal to satisfy the pangs of hunger of their large families "come to an arrangement"; politicians looking for promotion or for pardon for some mistake they have made "come to an arrangement"; when the whole nation lacks the wherewithal to rise from its proletarian status, it "comes to an arrangement".

The Italians dreaded the entry of America into the war, or rather, they did not know whether they dreaded it or desired it, because America's entry would probably be the determining factor in the conflict, and would speed up the return of peace. Berlin kept her eyes fixed on the United States as a rather serious danger; but in Rome it was an eventuality that was considered with greater seriousness, because it was impossible to overlook the fact that some ten million Italians lived in America. They were always an investment for Italy, for money was sent by them in a steady stream to their families, to say nothing of the moral support given to their native land by their toil in a distant rich and powerful foreign country. Italians at home based their hopes

on their fellow-countrymen in America as their best ambassadors. They wondered whether their kinsmen across the ocean would succeed in securing clemency for Italy, if America should decide to go to war against the Axis.

And what about the military developments? Germany had sprung an offensive on Russia—an offensive which, at the start, seemed to go very well. Of course they could not know in Rome what I knew, seeing that I had only just left Russia. I was aware that the Russians, though they feared an attack by Germany, and were preparing to meet it, did not expect it so soon. Russia was still going through the process of completing her preparations for war when the German troops hurled themselves suddenly on her territory. If Stalin had not been so firmly established in power it would have been a repetition of the disastrous end of France. But Stalin was not the man to be dismayed, even had the Germans taken Moscow in their first dash across the frontier.

I tried to air these views in a series of articles which the *Popolo d'Italia* published under another name. I had studied the spirit of the Soviet people at close range. I pointed out that there was no use in cherishing any illusions on the subject, because on their own terrain the Russians would achieve miraculous performances. The Russian nation would respond as a man to the exhortations of Stalin. If the German General Staff believed that in this instance they could successfully play their usual surprise card, they would be facing a serious disillusionment, for Russia was not a country to be trifled with. The assurance given by the German Government that the campaign on the Soviet front would be finished in a few weeks could only convince the ultra-credulous. To me, Russia was like a monstrous octopus which, even if you lop off its tentacles, shoots out others which seize you in every direction and strangle you. Has anybody ever seen these gigantic monsters die easily? You do not know where their hearts are situated, and where the sensitive and delicate membrane is hidden in which lies the whole secret of the vitality of those dreadful hydras.

Hitler appeared to have underestimated the difficulties of

the undertaking. His head swollen by victories, he flung himself furiously against an immovable wall. That wall may have trembled, but it remained firm on its foundation. Russia would retain its foothold, no matter what happened.

But these victories of the first weeks, which recalled the lightning, mad race over the fields of France, left Roman circles open-mouthed. It was thought that Hitler was about to display to the world another of his wild acts of prowess. Although I tried my utmost to persuade people that this series of over-runings and occupations would be followed by another series of painful experiences, nobody would listen to me. My sequence of articles was cut short.

Rosso, the Italian Ambassador in Moscow, had, meanwhile, reached Rome after a difficult journey which started from Moscow on the day following the outbreak of war on the Eastern front, and continued over the Caucasus and Asia Minor through Istanbul and the Balkans. With him were all the other officials of the embassy, Mascia, Ferrero, Bombassei and Rellio. Assetati, the Chief Secretary, had remained in Zegrab, where he immediately took up work with the Italian Legation. Rosso's wife, who was on her return to Moscow from the United States, whither she had gone to visit her relatives, was held up in Tokio. I believe she was there for a whole year before she met her husband again.

Rosso's last hours in Moscow were rather distressing. He learned of the declaration of war from the radio. Everybody was taken by surprise. In the radio transmission which the Ambassador heard there was a message quoted from Stefani, stating that the Italian Government, associating itself with the German Government, had declared war on Russia. Rosso had no official communications from Rome, and not being able to trust a mere radio announcement, which might be false, he went to the Kremlin to have the statement confirmed by Wyczinsky, the Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs. In the Kremlin there was all the agitation and bustle of big happenings. Rosso had to wait a long time before he got an interview. The moment he saw Wyczinsky, he asked, "Has the Commissar been informed that my country is at war with

yours? Please forgive this peculiar way of asking for information on a matter which I should have learned from another source, being the Ambassador from the Italian Government. But unfortunately I have no instructions from Rome and I am in the dark with regard to the situation."

Wyczinsky was unable to inform him there and then whether the information was true or false. It was already known in the Kremlin that Germany had declared war, but the Vice-Commissar had heard nothing about Italy. He sent for his secretary and told him to make an enquiry on the matter forthwith. After a few minutes the reply came that Italy had followed Germany's example, and was now to be considered an enemy of the Soviet Union.

Rosso's confusion as he returned to the Embassy may well be imagined. If telegrams had not come from Rome, it was either because they had gone astray in the general muddle, or because Palazzo Chigi had simply forgotten to inform its representative. The declaration of war had been made to the Soviet Ambassador in Rome.

During the hours that followed our Embassy tried to keep in contact, as was natural, with the German Embassy, as they were both in the same boat. Schulenburg too was excited and disconcerted, and immersed in the indispensable routine of preparations for leaving. That same evening agents of the G.U.P. presented themselves at the headquarters of our Embassy in the *Wesnina Ulica* to demand, first the handing over of all arms that might be there, and secondly, the immediate dismissal of the Russian personnel in our offices and in the personal employment of the ambassador. It was just a question of some clerks, a few messengers, domestic servants and porters.

On the following day all the members of the Embassy left Moscow by a direct special train for Batum. The journey was slow and exhausting and there were cases of physical prostration and collapse among the travellers, owing to the excitement of the last perturbed hours of their stay in Moscow.

So I met Rosso and the others once more at the Termini Station in Rome at the end of their pilgrimage. Rosso con-

firmed my own impression that war had come like a bomb to the Government and to Soviet public opinion—so utterly unexpected was it. The reports which all the diplomatic representatives of the Tripartite Pact in Moscow had sent to their respective Governments only a few days before June 22 were unanimous in denying the possibility of such a conflict.

Ciano was not in Rome when Rosso and the others arrived there. They had to wait for a week before they could get an interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In Palazzo Chigi, as I have already pointed out, they were preparing for news of a complete Russian collapse. Once more, as if his past experiences had taught him nothing, Mussolini was seized with an irresistible itch to get into the limelight. Protracted negotiations were started between Rome and Berlin to devise ways and means for Italy's "symbolical" participation in the Russian campaign.

It was very lucky for our soldiers that the preparations for the organisation of the Italian Expeditionary Force for Russia took rather a long time. Italian infantrymen were saved from the painful position in which those German soldiers were placed who had set out for a war which seemed destined to be of brief duration, and consequently started the campaign without any preparation for wintering on the frozen steppes of Russia.

An agreement was made between the Italian and German commands that the former should provide from their own resources and even with their own trains for the transport of troops from Italy to the Eastern Front. The Italians were to make provision on their own account for all their essential requirements.

This was another useful opportunity for showing what a slender bond existed between fighting Italy and fighting Germany, and how little camaraderie prevailed between the two armed groups. We had to prepare our own convoys to transport Italian troops by degrees across unknown territories, deep into the boundless immensities of the Russian landscape. When we ran short of water the Germans did not help us. They refused even to act as intermediaries when we had to

apply to the local Russian people in order to obtain the necessary help for the expedition.

So far as we were concerned it seemed that we had returned to the days when the Napoleonic army embarked on the disastrous destiny which took us thousands of miles from our native land to face a fight which was not ours.

Chapter X

THE LESSON OF AFRICA

AT this point I was called to watch the vicissitudes of the war from a different observation post—that of Sweden. It is the fate of us newspaper writers to be photographers of the ephemeral, sent for a little while here and a little while there, at random along the earth's meridian, always in quest of new points of view to report for a public sated with news. We are globe-trotters who do not trot to amuse ourselves. Some of us modern Marco Polos with our portable typewriters have travelled so much that one might say we have gone round the whole world several times in the course of our wanderings. I knew some of them—the Weygands, the Knickerbockers and the Webb Millers. When war breaks out we newspapermen career around it, like the moth round the candle, from all points of the compass to learn about all its phases, its sufferings—its history from day to day.

Stockholm is a great recompense to a man who has had to drag on a feverish nomad existence alternating between a Berlin tormented by war, and a Rome blissfully ignorant and unstable on the borderland of this war, going thence to a Moscow which he was forced to leave just at the precise moment when it too was caught up in the conflagration. The capital of Sweden is hospitable, restful, and firmly determined to defend its peace. Morgagni said to me, "You may choose between Rome, Vichy, some cities of South America, and Stockholm." I made my choice, and I have not repented of it.

Up there, in the calmness of the north, gazing on a landscape whose multi-coloured stretches of swamp stand out more brilliantly in the reflection of the semi-Arctic light, living amid a people who have learned to appreciate the benefits of a civilian life undarkened by the fierce emotions of war, one is not swayed by passion and the world's problems are weighed with a more detached and calm contemplativeness. How this

corner of Europe has succeeded in keeping clear of the miasma, and immune to the sorcery of the illusions that cause war, seems a miracle. Moscow was like that when I was there, and people there lived more detached from the European conflict. But all has been changed there. The peace which was a source of pride to the Russian people is a thing of the past, and millions of human lives have been lost owing to Germany's insensate craving for destruction.

From Stockholm I resumed sending to Stefani my daily messages giving details of the repercussions of all that happened in the world around me. I was assisted by a good colleague, Giovanni Arista, who was forced to give up the study of comparative philosophy and turn his hand to dealing with politics and war—utterly different themes, which were quite new to him. The days passed by as we recorded events which were always more and more unforeseen.

A little before the Christmas of 1941 the United States entered the war officially. It was another of Hitler's notions that led to America's direct participation in the conflict. That notion originated from his crack-brained imagination and his boundless megalomania. But perhaps he only precipitated a state of affairs which had now become ineluctable. North American policy soon swerved in favour of Great Britain, and Roosevelt got the Lease-Lend Act passed in order to be able to come to the assistance of all who were fighting against the usurper and the ravisher of Europe.

But the American people no longer hesitated to take the field. The Germans themselves provided them with the incidents which culminated in a decision. Hitler saw that his plans for bringing Stalin's Russia to its knees by a lightning stroke had completely failed. Contrary to his anticipations the Germans had to spend the winter, which by a stroke of bad luck was exceptionally inclement, on the inhospitable steppes of the limitless Soviet territory. The goal was still very far off, and, on the other hand, a counter-attack was an ever imminent possibility. The German masses began to show signs of discouragement.

Hitler recalled the existence of the Tripartite Pact, which

was drawn up between Berlin, Tokyo, and Rome, in 1940, with the programme "The Creation of a New World Order". What a ridiculous combination! Think of it! Of the three vertices of the triangle no two were inspired by like interests. The Tripartite Pact was formed to act as a magnet for a number of little States which were compelled by their geographical position to live under the protection of three Great Powers; those little States are Hungary, Rumania, Slovakia, and Croatia which had only recently been placed under the sceptre of a prince of the House of Savoy who did not show any desire to exercise his sovereign dignity. Then there was Manchukuo in Asia, wearing the mask of a dependency of Japan owing to its proximity to that country.

Hitler felt that he had only to invoke the Tripartite Pact in order to frighten and checkmate the United States. Japan could force the hand of the Republic of the Stars and Stripes across the ocean, and so contribute materially to the crusade for the "New Order." Thence came the Pearl Harbour treachery. It needed only this to galvanize the people of North America into concerted action. The wave of indignation that swept over the Americans when they were confronted with this provocative and perfidious act on the part of Japan was terrific—the Japanese Ambassador was in Washington for the purpose of carrying on negotiations at the very moment when Pearl Harbour was being bombarded! It may be that Hitler and his accomplices were confident that, in the face of this first threat, the people of the United States would revolt against their President and either overthrow him or force him to observe an absolute neutrality in the European conflict. In the very same way Berlin believed that the Bolshevik régime would have crumbled at the mere sight of the German armies. But the Fuehrer was merely piling new mistakes on those he had already committed. North American isolationism, instead of being given a fresh impetus, went over to the ranks of the interventionists in the hour of the insult offered to the nation. Germany found herself facing a new and an even more dreaded adversary.

From our observation post in Sweden, too, we were looking

on at North Africa, a new theatre of exciting happenings. By the end of February, 1941, fortune favoured the British. Mussolini was forced to realise that many other things were needed for a war in the desert beside the brave Italian infantryman who stumbled along with his rifle over the scorching sands to die on the enemy's barbed wire. Water was needed; wood was needed for the battalion field-kitchens. Finally, tanks were indispensable for fighting in the desert, and Italy only had a very limited number and those had a very limited gun-power strength. Owing to the lack of all these things our army in Africa had to withdraw before the pressure of the enemy under the command of Wavell, sacrificing Tobruk and Benghazi during the course of their retreat. Later on, the insuperable difficulties and exigencies of the fight in the desert fortunately held up Wavell when he was mid-way in his advance. But it was perfectly obvious that to be in a position to win we needed new up-to-date weapons suitable for the terrain, and a system of organisation fool-proof to the last degree. The nation which possessed tanks in large numbers was Germany, Italy's ally.

So Mussolini asked his friend Hitler for at least one division of tanks and reinforcements of anti-tank guns. Mussolini wanted only arms, not men. His idea was that the campaign in Libya should be kept up by Italian forces alone, provided with a certain amount of German material. The prestige of the nation and of Fascism demanded that the Italian Army should be unaided, and that, having placed herself in a difficult situation, Italy should learn to get out of it solely by her own resourcefulness, with the help of her own soldiers. Fate had given Italy the task of maintaining her own fight on the other shore of the Mediterranean, where there was nothing but barren desert land, lacking in every kind of natural resource, or any advantage whatsoever, except that of prestige and tradition—an advantage which appealed to Italy alone. Apropos of this, in the course of a speech before the Abyssinian war Mussolini stated that it was the tragic destiny of Italy to fight merely for the possession of patches of deserts dotted at very long intervals with wells, and difficult of access. It was

strange that destiny should call a proletarian country to perform superhuman colonising feats. Libya had entailed for Italy a long record of blood and sweat, and all the consequences of a titanic struggle between man and nature. Twenty-five years of patient toil, the last four of which were under the guidance of the Libyan Governor, Italo Balbo, had wrought positive miracles. To be sure, Libya could not be compared with the richer regions of South Africa, but students of colonial politics used to flock there from all directions to get ocular evidence of the path that had been followed for the reclamation of those provinces. All this now ran the risk of being lost owing to a military defeat. Mussolini was thinking of a counter-attack in order to free Italy's model colony and possibly to continue the victorious march right into Egypt.

But Berlin was determined not to comply with Mussolini's desire. It may have been because the German General Staff had little faith in the Duce's strategic talents, or that Hitler was contemplating taking over Africa for himself. One thing is certain, and that is that help was granted solely on one condition, which was that complete German armoured divisions with their own arms and their own generals should enter the battle of the desert alongside 200,000 Italian soldiers, and that the command of the counter-attacking forces should be entrusted to Rommel.

The inevitable confusion began at this point. Sometimes it was not known whether Rommel or General Gariboldi was in command in Libya. The latter, though nominally in supreme command, had no say in the conduct of major operations. The Italian General Staff found itself confronted with an extremely delicate and difficult situation, because wherever they turned up the Germans wished to reserve for themselves the right of making all decisions.

All in all, the German contribution to the African campaign was outstandingly inferior to that of Italy. To transport those two divisions of German tanks with their subsidiary appurtenances, the Italians had to encounter tremendous difficulties, because during the Mediterranean crossing they had to face the constant threat of British submarines, and the

R.A.F. Moreover, at Palermo and Naples, the embarkation bases, a number of more or less serious disadvantages had to be encountered. The Germans did not leave for Africa until they had made sure that they had established a firm grip on the two ports just mentioned, and especially in Naples, where they firmly established their headquarters. They stayed in Naples for more than a month without budging, taking that city by storm with their spectacular equipment, commandeering the best hotels for their officers, seizing dumps and stores for war material, and taking possession of all the harbour installations for their own exclusive use.

The ships for the transport of troops to Africa had of necessity to travel in convoy, for the sake of greater security. The Germans insisted on taking over all the aerodromes in Sicily in order to be able to use them as bases for the Luftwaffe's aerial patrolling and bombardment. The Luftwaffe was under the command of Kesselring. Remembering all this, it is strange to recall that under Graziani the Italians had originally set out for the war in Libya without any proper base, and lacking any form of security and all conveniences. Yet they fared forth boldly in the spirit of adventure which had once inspired Ulysses.

Several gaps were made in our convoys by the activities of the R.A.F. I had spoken to some of our officers who travelled on ships commandeered for the transport of troops to Africa. They told me of several dramatic sinkings. We lost a number of men during those crossings. On one occasion the R.A.F., starting from their base in Malta, attacked a big transport of ours which had on board a thousand Italian and German soldiers and a large amount of war material. Two-thirds of the men perished. Nobody knows fully the terrifying pages of the history of those Mediterranean crossings. The communiqués of the Supreme Command never referred to them.

Towards the end of January, 1942, after several months of preparation, Rommel decided to start the offensive for the purpose of driving back the British to the Egyptian frontier. It must not be imagined that the Germans alone comprised the front line in this attack, for it included also Italian infantry

divisions. In the gaps between tank and tank the young Italian soldier, dripping with sweat, his uniform in tatters, marched to the attack, collapsed and rose up again amidst a terrific din caused by explosions and by the hellish clash of the tanks. Had it not been for our infantry Rommel would have been unable to do anything.

The action in the end of January produced no great advantages, however. Wavell had firmly established himself in the territory he had conquered. The forces of the Axis made slender progress towards Tobruk. In Berlin it was said that this offensive should not be regarded as the real genuine offensive, but as an action of approach and a tentative probing of the terrain.

Some time elapsed without any incident of note. On May 1, Hitler and Mussolini met again, when it was decided to advance. Rommel had got fresh reinforcements, and had arranged for the substitution of some of the tanks which had come from Germany by others fitted with a special system, already adopted by the British, which prevented the water in the radiators from boiling and evaporating.

On June 19 Tobruk was beleaguered, and two days later it was recaptured. In that Libyan war Tobruk was what Kharkov was in the war on the Eastern Front. Its possession passed several times from the one side to the other, and it suffered indescribably in the course of the series of desperate battles, in which it was the objective. The Eighth British Army, commanded by General Auchinleck, was obliged to retreat rapidly, leaving one position after the other including Mersa Matruh, back on El Alamein. All this was just a mad gallop in which the world saw nothing but the boldness of General Rommel's strategy, and the overwhelming might of his army of panzers, forgetting that at the same lightning speed the riflemen of the Bologna, Trento, Pavia, Folgore, and Littorio divisions had to advance. But Rommel got all the credit for this achievement, and was promoted by Hitler to the rank of Marshal.

Nobody denies, of course, that Rommel showed himself a commander of great ability. Even Churchill gladly paid a

tribute in the House of Commons to his generalship. In Italy people spoke of Rommel as a military genius who was somewhat reminiscent of Napoleon. A man who took his place at the head of his own army and led it to such a brilliant victory is not the kind of man you meet every day. The Italians did not forget that they owed a debt of gratitude to the Germans who had helped our army in Libya to get on their feet again and reconquer the colony.

But their admiration of and gratitude to the Germans notwithstanding, the Italians had to endure a great many humiliations at their hands. The splendid help given to us by the Rommel panzer army was accompanied by a series of acts of insolence on the part of the Germans. Once more it was demonstrated how impossible it was for Germans and Italians to work side by side for a common cause. During the course of the whole advance the guests acted domineeringly towards their hosts, whenever they felt inclined to do so. In short they treated their Italian comrades in arms with haughtiness and contempt. They behaved as though all the merit for any success was theirs alone; Rommel even went to Rome, at the summons of Mussolini, who wished to honour him as the saviour of Libya.

As has been already said, the uninitiated never knew who was the commander at the head of the Libyan forces. Even when Gariboldi was superseded by General Bastico this equivocal state of affairs continued, and was allowed to continue purposely by the German Government and the German Press, which always spoke about Rommel only. But when, some months later, the fortunes of war changed and what had been a sensational advance was changed into a tragic withdrawal, the German Press suddenly discovered the existence of an Italian general who was in command of all the troops in Libya, and in reply to the query of a journalist at the Conference of the Foreign Press in Berlin Schmidt declared that Bastico, being the senior in command even above Rommel, bore all the responsibility for the disaster.

I never could understand why the Government of Rome

did not think it necessary to make some very clear and detailed statements with regard to the Libyan campaign. After the disastrous loss of our possessions in Africa, it would have been able in some form or other to explain to the world how things stood. In the Ministry of War in Rome there must have been documents of extraordinary interest calculated to throw light on many obscure incidents, unless the Germans, when they occupied the Italian capital, did away with them. But the guilt of criminal silence rests on our authorities for allowing darkness to brood over events in Africa—darkness which the Germans turned to good account for themselves by circulating the rumour that the Libyan campaign collapsed through the fault of the Italians.

Nobody has told, by the way, about the strange manoeuvres devised by Germany to secure, unknown to Italy, predominance in Egypt, in the event of that nation being conquered. The most advanced position reached by Rommel, at El Alamein, is hardly ninety kilometres distant from Alexandria. At that moment it seemed as though Hitler had Egypt in his pocket. Taking advantage of the impression produced among the Egyptians themselves by the fact of seeing the famous *condottiere* Rommel sweep forward with his tanks towards the sources of the Nile, the Germans tried, with the help of their agents, to prepare the ground in their favour by discrediting Italy among the Egyptian population.

If the Axis had had the luck to occupy Alexandria and Cairo, there would have been a repetition of what happened in France, with the sole difference that this time the glory of the victory would have been equally shared between Italians and Germans. Italy would have been present at the occupation of Egypt by Germany, and Hitler would have once more urged Mussolini to forego any demands pending the conclusion of peace. And to think that Mussolini had made all his preparations to enter Alexandria in triumph!

The crafty game was, however, well masked by German propaganda which insisted on the perfectly harmonious collaboration with Italy. They wished to prevent the world from knowing about the unpleasant incidents that were

continually taking place in Africa between the Germans and Italians, their mutual accusations and recriminations. They did not want the world to know that the soldiers of the two armies regarded each other with distrust and hostility, that the officers of the two armies shirked saluting one another, and that disputes were constantly cropping up over trifles. I cannot understand how General Bastico could have remained so long at his post in that atmosphere of tension, but maybe he adopted the plea of leaving to Rommel all the initiative, as well as all the responsibility. If an Italian general had tried to make a stand against German pretensions, he would have been immediately repudiated by Rome.

When in August I went for a short holiday to Italy I saw that the canker was very far advanced. Fascist policy was writhing convulsively in the net which it had made itself. For the future it would be impossible for this Fascist policy to show the faintest trace of independence. The political life of the peninsula was dominated by the iron law of a strict Italo-German co-operation. The Germans had Sicily entirely in their hands. Their control was extended to all Italian activities connected with the war. The wish of the German military attaché in Rome was a religion, even in the eyes of Cavallero, the Under-Secretary for War. The Germans knew that it would be enough for them to apply directly to Palazzo Venezia, where the Duce did not tolerate any discussion when it was a question of satisfying a desire of theirs.

Italian foreign trade was reduced to the interchanges visualised in the agreements between Germany and Italy, and very little remained to be done with neutral countries. A good deal of Italian merchandise to and from the neutral North got no further than Germany, under the pretext of difficulties of transport. Cargoes of Italian fruit remained for weeks rotting on the quays of Lübeck and Stettin, because the Germans would not allow them to continue their route to Scandinavia. Much of this merchandise of ours was simply impounded and sold again by the Germans in neutral countries in order to obtain foreign money. The name of the country of origin was changed. Germany carried out the

business transaction, and Italy remained with nothing to show for it all.

In more than one neutral state it happened that a German commercial traveller got himself appointed as representative of an alleged Italian firm of exporters, with the sole aim of putting a stop to those importations which meant either competition with, or an obstacle of some other kind to German foreign trade. In the Government offices in Rome these things were known, but nobody dared to raise his voice in protest. Some high-placed Fascist officials even showed themselves very accommodating in the matter.

Having arrived in the Eternal City at a period in the campaign which was more lucky for the forces of the Axis, which still held the advanced post of El Alamein, I found that an optimistic feeling prevailed, tinged with a certain amazement that the Germans did not make up their minds to resume and finish off the offensive on the Eastern front.

To all who asked my views on the developments in Russia, where they knew I had been, I gave the usual reply, which expressed a conviction that had existed in my mind ever since the first day of the war against the Soviets—that Hitler would break his ribs in the East.

At this juncture Mario Appelius raved on the radio more violently than ever, surpassing even Virginio Gayda in his imbecile statements. Almost every evening on the Rome radio, in the feature "News of the day's events", he used to launch forth in the language of the gutter against the Allies and especially against Churchill. Compared with his vulgar outbursts on the radio Fritzsche's effusions on the Berlin radio were like bouquets of summer flowers. Radio-listeners in Italy were so disgusted that when the announcer stated: "We will now give the review of the events of the day by Mario Appelius", they would switch off before the full name was pronounced. That was how he came by the nickname "Mario App". On the other hand, though Mussolini never got to know about it, the Italian public listened every evening with an almost religious concentration to the discourse given on the London radio by Colonel Stevens. For seven or eight

years—perhaps longer—Colonel Stevens addressed the Italian people from London every evening, whether the weather was good or bad, with a simplicity and sincerity which were all the more appealing owing to his perfect southern accent. In order to open their eyes about Mussolini and Fascism, he started his series of talks before the Abyssinian war, and, like a veteran on the battle field, he never abandoned his post. "Stevens is speaking", the Italian listeners whispered to one another, and listened with rapt attention. Even the English people had no idea of the outstanding part this man played, without knowing it, in the formation of the new free conscience of the Italian people.

A little weariness, and the first signs of discouragement, began to develop among the Italian people when they realised that the developments promised by Mussolini were not verified, and that the war showed no indication of coming to an end. The shadow of discouragement spread more and more, and assumed a darker hue, as a result of statements made by German travellers who came to Italy. They told how the Allied Air Forces had wrought terrible devastation in many cities in Germany, among others Hamburg, Cologne, Dusseldorf and even in Berlin itself. They declared that they could not stand it any longer, and they took a very gloomy view of the future. A sardonic joke about the Blitzkrieg which went the rounds among these German visitors, ran thus: "Do you know what will be the best seller in the year 1960? The book that will have the greatest success in 1960 will be the one written by Hitler from his headquarters with the title: *Fünfzehn Jahre Blitzkrieg* (Fifteen years of Blitzkrieg)."

On their part the Italians were fond of repeating *ad nauseam* a little story much in the same vein. Two friends, so the story ran, met after listening to Mussolini's speech. "What do you think of that speech?" one of them asked the other. The man who was questioned did not know how to reply right away. But the demand having been repeated, he took his friend by the arm, and went off with him to his own house. When they got there they shut themselves up in a room. The man who had been questioned looked first in all the dark corners and

under the bed, tested the walls to ascertain if they were sound-proof, and then said in a whisper, "Well, if you want to know the truth, but don't tell it to anybody, I like the speech!"

Rome laughed, but the war was gripping the life of the nation more and more and cramping it. The first sacrifices had to be made for the Libyan campaign. To speak of alms in a country which is not rich is much the same as saying, "Let us give alms" to the poor. We had to send to Germany a considerable share of our agricultural products. That was in accordance with agreement. Some establishments worked only one day in the week. The cost of living rose. Rationing had hardly been applied to Italy before it proved to be the most rigid in all Europe. The quantity of bread allowed per head was inadequate, and it was made with a mysterious mixture of indigestible ingredients. Oil, so necessary to Mediterranean people, was unprocurable. Even an African negro, who certainly leads a frugal enough existence, could not have lived on such a system of rationing. Yet Italy laughed, and was resigned, and sang as she had always done. It was always a comfort to me in those days when I returned from war-smitten countries to come to Italy to refresh my soul.

If there had been no such thing as Fascism! If there had never been an Axis! That detested word "Axis" was on the lips of all Fascists, who hardly even knew the meaning of the term. What a strange type of mammal this Italian Fascist was! I am not thinking of the hierarchy, the egotistical and profiteering Fascist, but of the ordinary humble member of the organisation. Mussolini had declared "We shall win!" and from that day, at the foot of every official letter, and sometimes even at the foot of private letters, alongside the signature of the writer, the Fascist wrote in bold characters, "*Vinceremo*" (we shall win). It never occurred to him to cast his eye on the map of Europe. He abhorred discussion, and preferred his own blind, narrow, unquestioning obedience. At home, no members of the family would dare to make any protest against Fascism—it would be an outrage. But did not his faith in Fascism bring him some advantages? Nothing

to speak of. I believe that a little of the spirit of the first great world war inspired the average obedient orthodox Fascist when he said to himself, "The chief has ordered it! The chief wants it done!" So he went to his death because it was the wish of his chief.

The Fascist saw the war through a kaleidoscope. As propaganda for this war, he used the arguments that had been drilled into him—space to live in and defence against Bolshevism. But where space to live in began and ended—that was a question he never asked himself. He never asked himself whether Germany, for which he had such profound admiration, would be equal to the task she had undertaken of bending all Europe to her own despotic will. He preferred to ask himself with candid amazement why Great Britain and America were so obstinate that they could not see the fatal alternatives put by Hitler to our continent—a German victory or the triumph of Bolshevism. And what if Europe were given over to the virus of Bolshevism? If Hitler, for instance, in order to revenge himself for the opposition of the democratic powers, should himself throw open the gates of Europe to the subversive Asiatic flood! "Only imagine it!" said the Fascist. "Bolshevism on the coast of the Channel—facing England!"

But this ordinary type of Fascist could not be held responsible for his inability to see that the nation was hurtling rapidly to its ruin, for its petty rulers declared that just one minute before its collapse Fascism would save itself and would win, and that Germany would triumph. If he still preserved even a shred of his Fascist idealism, he would always wait patiently for that reversal of the situation which the false prophets had guaranteed to him.

At Capri I found that Edda Ciano had changed her ways of life a little. She had apparently been made to realise from authoritative quarters that she would have to give up certain adventures which set tongues wagging. I also met Doering, master of ceremonies in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who came to Capri to convalesce after an illness, and enjoyed the hospitality of Alfieri. Doering was unrecognisable, with his yellow beard framing a pallid pock-marked

face. Later on I was told that Hitler, on seeing the latest photograph of Doering with his newly-grown beard, said with an exclamation of satisfaction, "That's the kind of a master of ceremonies I want!" And Doering, who before returning to Berlin had shaved off his beard, had to let it grow again!

Capri was full of German soldiers on leave. Most of them belonged to the Hermann Goering division, which fought in the front line in Africa. Some of these German soldiers talked about wanting to return home. The news from the Libyan front was not bad, but it was not reassuring. After El Alamein Rommel did not succeed in advancing one foot, but he held his position quite firmly. The British seemed to be marking time. Perhaps they were reorganising. Churchill had just been in Cairo, and on the battlefield he had superseded Auchinleck by General Alexander. Montgomery—"Monty", as his soldiers call him—was put in command of the Eighth Army.

I returned to Stockholm when my leave was finished, and had hardly resumed work when things began to liven up in Africa. The British had started a counter-offensive. They had got reinforcements of men and war material. Throughout the whole summer Allied convoys had come and gone without undergoing serious losses, and the army which made the attack in the defence of El Alamein and in the depression of Quettara was a band of fresh and resolute men. The Italo-German bastion, as if smitten by an unexpected cyclone, began to totter and crack.

It was a time of alarms in Rome. Where was Rommel? people asked anxiously. It seemed that he was not with his troops, but in Berlin enjoying triumph after triumph. At the first sign of danger, however, he went by plane to the head of his army, where a serious position met his eyes. His front line was broken. The columns of the British tanks were driving a wedge into the line held by the Italians and Germans. Thereupon this man who had been considered a genius, and who had been extolled to the stars in the Press as the perfect general, the leader whom Goebbels, in words of enthusiastic admiration, had introduced to the crowd in the Sportspalast in

Berlin, as the greatest man since the days of Hindenburg, this invincible hero decided that the position was hopeless and that all resistance would be futile. He even considered it superfluous to inform commanders of front line Italian units of his decision. What concerned him most at the moment was to save his Panzer Army by a retreat covered by rearguard action. And of course the rearguard had to be supplied by the Italian divisions, Folgore and Pavia. These Italians found themselves practically alone, abandoned without any motor-vehicles, because the Germans had taken them all away as they went.

I am only stating what I heard from a great number of returned soldiers, and what was confirmed at the front by the accounts of the special war correspondents of the English and American newspapers at the headquarters of General Montgomery. The Italian detachments thought at first that they had to put up a stand against the enemy, and thereby they lost time, and gave no thought to putting themselves in safety. Rommel's plan visualised the necessity of sacrificing the rearguard; but, that being so, why did he not leave for their protection, at least a few of his tanks? Over 50,000 Italians were taken prisoner during those first dramatic days. Whole divisions were surrounded and annihilated. The infantrymen of the Folgore looked like the lost wandering souls of the *Purgatorio* in that desert following on the heels of the Eighth British Army, who, in its eagerness to follow up Rommel, had no time to worry about them. An airman who miraculously managed to be taken prisoner told me about the chivalrous attitude of the Allies towards our soldiers. The British had very swift armoured cars at the disposal of the Eighth Army; they appeared unexpectedly at our aerodromes and in front of our barricades, but did not open fire until they had made sure that the Italian soldiers, who had been left without arms and protection of any kind, were out of danger. The enemy tried to spare the life of the Italian soldier, knowing that he was defenceless.

The rest is history. Nothing could be done any longer to stop "Monty", who, heedless of the murderous fire of the

German anti-tank 88-millimetre guns, which were truly formidable weapons, continued to forge ahead with clockwork precision, even as Rommel continued to fall back with equal precision until he found himself in Tunisia, and eventually without any other foothold on the soil of Africa. Everything went to pieces with the Axis, and while the Germans were absolutely unable to organise the defence of any position, for the honour of the flag the Italians wished to resist to the last. They were helpless, however, to do anything without backing.

Before this happened, however, General Messe, the commander of our Libyan armies, seeing that Rommel's sole concern was to get away his own motorised divisions in safety, and that by doing so, the very last region of Libya, Tripolitania, would be abandoned without a fight, went to Rome for the express purpose of talking to Mussolini. He was first received by Cavallero, who was rather bad-tempered as he listened to his account of the position in Africa, but, in deference to Messe's importunities he reluctantly agreed to arrange that he should see the Duce at Palazzo Venezia. Precious days passed before the Duce learned from another source of the presence of Messe in Rome and desired to see him. The general tried to convince Mussolini that the abandonment of every form of resistance by Rommel was a crime that injured Italy. But Cavallero continually interrupted Messe, and did not allow him to finish his statement. Messe tried to prevail on Mussolini at least to order the defence of Tripolitania, our most ancient colony.

But by the time this conversation took place it was too difficult to adopt defensive measures; furthermore, Mussolini seemed too distressed and grieved to be able to take any decision. But two days later Cavallero was dismissed and superseded by General Ambrosio.

On November 8 the American Expeditionary Force, commanded by General Eisenhower, disembarked in Algiers and Morocco, and inflicted a still more serious blow on the Axis. After this Mussolini saw all hopes disappearing of reinforcing his wretched broken divisions in the French Colonial

territories. He was among the Italians who at that moment hurled maledictions against Hitler for not having allowed Italy in July, 1940, to occupy Tunisia, which would now be a God-sent refuge for the retreating armies. I fancy that Hitler himself was sorry for having put this veto on Mussolini at the time of the signing of the armistice with France.

The American disembarkation was carried out with an impressive expeditiousness. It had a rather depressing effect on the Axis, which had its rear also threatened. If Eisenhower had immediately gone to Tunis, where, at the moment of his disembarkation, there were only the Italian and German Military Commissions which had been pre-arranged in accordance with the Armistice, the disaster would have been even more sweeping because the Italo-German forces would not have been able to make, as they did, a bridge-head in the South of Tunisia in order to be able to try a jump across in safety to Sicily.

Tripoli was evacuated on January 1, 1943. It had been the noblest and brightest symbol of our colonial work; it was the city dearest of all their African possessions to the heart of the Italians. Mussolini had some years previously raised Tripolitania to the level of a province in the Metropolitan territory, and, in consequence of this it had become, as it were, a continuation of the peninsula, and a tract of the sacred soil of their native land.

On the day after the fall of Tripoli Italy registered a change that was rather sensational in government circles. Galeazzo Ciano was forced by Mussolini to resign his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in exchange, was made Ambassador to the Vatican. How this happened is worth narrating, for it is really amusing. It seems that Ciano had discovered Mussolini's intention of getting rid of him. Accordingly he lost no time, but telephoned immediately to Guariglia, our representative at the Vatican, and hence, for the time being, still his subordinate, to ask the Cardinal Secretary of State what attitude the Holy See would adopt to the nomination of himself, Ciano, as its ambassador from the Italian Government. It was a question of "approval", to use the diplomatic term.

Guariglia was, of course, flabbergasted at learning what he was to do, but, nevertheless, he carried out his duty, since Ciano was still the Minister. In these circumstances, how could the Cardinal Secretary of State reply, except in an affirmative sense? He granted his approval, and with a document confirming it in his pocket, Ciano presented himself before Mussolini, who had meanwhile sent for him to sign his resignation from the post of Foreign Minister. The "torpedoing" which Mussolini had planned did not actually transpire, for Ciano anticipated him by exhibiting the letter whereby the Vatican "approved" of his nomination as Ambassador to the Holy See. It was a question of self-appointment; it was likewise a perfidious trick played on the Duce, who—so they say—in a fit of rage gave his son-in-law a slap in the mouth. There was nothing astonishing in this outburst of family squabbling. There had been bad blood for a long time between father-in-law and son-in-law, for Ciano used to speak openly about Mussolini as a "flabby fool" and Mussolini did not hide his distrust of Ciano. This is one of the many instances of the low ebb to which the morality of official Fascist circles had fallen.

Events in Africa had been a bitter lesson; Mussolini had trusted too much to his own strength. The Mediterranean had never been, after the fall of the Roman empire, the lake between Italy and Africa which Mussolini had always called it—a lake in which Italy could move at freedom. Even before hostilities had broken out, his statement about the Mediterranean problem had presented extreme obstacles to a solution in the "Mussolini" sense, for, in order to become the ruler of a sea it was essential to conquer it and maintain the conquest of it. Perhaps one day Italy might have been able to assert her claim, when her naval power reached a point to enable her to lord it over the Mediterranean; but in 1940 Italy was still very far from having reached such a development. Great Britain would never resign her own supremacy in the Mediterranean except to superior forces, and perhaps not even then, because, while for Italy the overlordship of that sea is a question of prestige based on racial traditions, it is a matter

of practical necessity for Great Britain. All parts of the British Empire are very far removed geographically from the mother island, and the links between them must be maintained with the minimum expenditure of time and means of communication.

Furthermore, Mussolini should have remembered that Italy of her self could not perform miracles. She is a country absolutely without any raw materials, being rich only in labour and goodwill. In fifteen years of Fascist rule the poverty of the peninsula could not be transmuted into wealth, though the two great Anglo-Saxon powers, Great Britain and America, had shown their sympathy with an Italy awakening to a new life. Mussolini would have been able to ensure for himself a high position in European esteem, and have made Italy increasingly prosperous had he appreciated the consent and assistance of the Great Powers. A more benevolent and attentive attitude had developed among them towards the Colonial aspirations of Italy, first proclaimed by Francesco Crispi, given poetic expression by Gabriele d'Annunzio in his "Songs from over the Seas", reaffirmed by Italian nationalists, and finally, and officially proclaimed by Mussolini himself, when he became head of the Government.

But Mussolini, who could never shake off his obsession of grandiose expansion, decided to carry out an audacious coup in the conquest of Abyssinia, while the British Fleet was cruising in the Mediterranean and Eden at Geneva was calling on the world to protest against Italian violence. The Duce ought to have known that, had Great Britain wished, she could have prevented the attack on Ethiopia. At least when he had attained his purpose, he should have kept quiet, and tried to obtain pardon for the deed of violence which he had perpetrated and which had luckily ended in a manner favourable to Italy. But perhaps it was because this act of violence was left unpunished that Mussolini went on to commit one act of madness after another, encouraged as he was now by Hitler's solidarity and support. In this way he eventually caused Italy to lose not only Abyssinia, but also Libya and the Mediterranean. "The other shore"—the

African one, which Mussolini thought was within reach of his hand—faded further and further into the distance, disappearing in the sand clouds whirled about by the desert storms.

At the end of April another meeting took place between the Duce and Hitler. The communiqué issued after their meeting reaffirmed "the common certainty of a final uncompromising victory". On the following day fell Tunis and Bizerta—the last garrison, the last hope. Tunis was much worse than Dunkirk, for many Italians did not escape at all. How many human lives were lost in the effort to cross the sea to Sicily, could never be ascertained. The R.A.F. and the British submarines were like terrible lethal scythes over the azure expanse of the Strait. Messe was taken prisoner—so was General Arnim who commanded the German forces in Tunisia. But Rommel was no longer in Africa.

The repercussions of this disaster among the Italian people were formidable. But they did not yet culminate in a real revolt against the Government, simply because the Fascist and Nazi Press insisted that the loss of Italy and of the last African base, although a cause of grief, did not imply any danger to Italy. They maintained that the Mediterranean, which had been so ungenerous in its treatment of the Axis, would be just as treacherous to the Allies if they should attempt to land on the peninsula. Sicily was described by the Roman newspapers as an impregnable fortress. They stated that the island was defended by a large number of Italian and German divisions, and that there were trains specially constructed to convey troops from one part of the coast to another, if the Allies tried to disembark anywhere. "Our most ardent desire", babbled the Berlin press, "is that the Allies should put us to the test and venture on the invasion of Sicily, which is not Tunis. After a few hours we will drive them back into the sea. Let them remember Dieppe!" And Mario Appelius said on the radio: "The English and American dogs will learn that the soil of Sicily burns even more fiercely than that of Africa!"

Chapter XI

AN INGLORIOUS SUNSET

BEFORE the curtain rings down on my narrative of the last act of the Italian tragedy, I believe that I should state what I heard and saw when, in the spring of 1943, I left Stockholm and paid a last visit to my unhappy country.

It was May. The Allies had not yet set foot in Sicily, though they did so soon after, on July 10. The invasion will be remembered as one of the most successful enterprises of this war, and one of the most decisive in importance, for as a result of it the continent of Europe which Hitler had declared to be an absolutely impregnable fortress was invaded for the first time. The fact is that he did not succeed in driving back the Allies into the Mediterranean. Of all the braggart challenges made by Hitler the most futile was when he defied the Allies to attempt an invasion of Europe. It could only be compared with that other braggart declaration when he said: "We shall hold Stalingrad, cost what it may." But Stalingrad was retaken by the Russians with appalling losses to the German Army.

After Sicily the landing of the British and Americans in any part whatsoever of the European continent was regarded as something that was definitely realisable. Only in Rome and Berlin was this possibility excluded, because Fascism and Nazism, always united in their illusions, thought themselves strong enough to preclude it. It was Berlin that laid special emphasis on the inviolability and invulnerability of the continent, while Rome echoed the words of Germany as the patient echoes the words of the hypnotist. But if nobody could prophesy the exact spot on which the Allied force would land, there seemed to be no doubt that the attempt would most probably be made in the direction of Italy, in consideration of the nearness of Tunisia which had just been conquered and of Sicily, and also taking into account the very efficient control

now carried out by the Allies over the Straits of Messina. The invasion of Sicily or Sardinia seemed more probable, for instance, than the invasion of Belgium, France or Norway. The objectives of the Allied observers were focused on Italy as the definite theatre of an imminent offensive.

The activity of the R.A.F. on the peninsula had been appreciably intensified and Anglo-American planes, with bases in Tunisia, were in a position to get with perfect ease to all the targets in Italy. After the violent bombardment of Berlin on March 1, attacks were made from bases in England, Africa and Malta on Italy's military and industrial objectives.

In Sicily the Axis got together as many planes as possible, German and Italian—though there were very few Italian ones left after the losses they had suffered in the African and Mediterranean skies. All Sicily had been converted into one huge German garrison under the command of Kesselring. The Sicilians were depressed and harassed when they saw the Germans behave as absolute masters in their land, and they made it plain later on by greeting with enthusiastic cheering the arrival of the Allies. The Germans made large-scale confiscations under the plea of defensive measures. The provincial and local bodies in Sicily were disregarded, just as though they did not exist, and the German command even secured the dismissal of several, because they had not been completely subservient to their whims. The only people who remained at their posts were the magistrates and mayors who, through fear or through pro-German sentiments, placed themselves at the disposal of the German military authorities and resigned all their own prerogatives. The island was impoverished because the Germans seized all its stores and especially its foodstuffs. It might be said, indeed, that Sicily lived by sacrificing itself for the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and their officers. Those officers even indulged in curious speculations such as the illicit sale of the petrol which was supplied very liberally to the German divisions, as the Russian and Rumanian oil-wells were in German hands. The sales were made to the civilian population in order to get money and to continue the work of bleeding which was well under way.

The cities most tortured by bombings were Genoa, Turin, Naples and Milan, and the Sicilian cities of Messina, Trapani and Palermo. The effects of an aerial attack on a populous Italian centre are appalling. All the cities just mentioned are densely populated. On many occasions, in the early years of his rule, Mussolini tried to grapple with urbanism and had advocated an exodus to the country from the over-populated cities. His preaching was in vain, however, because these teeming herds of city dwellers which had developed automatically with the development of industry, commerce, education and bureaucracy, are part of the economic life of the nation. In Genoa and Naples the buildings are frequently so close to one another that the sun never penetrates into the narrow tortuous streets, flanked by masses of brick and mortar, or at best only shoots slender shafts of light between them. When a bomb falls in such a maze of buildings, it wreaks terrible havoc, as it crashes down on the homes of thousands of people living in the confines of a few square acres. The ramshackle houses erected in these restricted areas sometimes laid out, as in Genoa, in super-imposed terraces, seem to swell out under the impact of the explosion, and are seen immediately afterwards to crumple up in a vast cloud in which everything is jumbled higgledy-piggledy in one terrific heap—crumbling walls, twisted metal rafters, segments of partitions, roof-slates half pulped to dust, multi-coloured splinters and shreds of furniture and tapestry, piles of ashes and dust covering the mangled bodies of men, women and children. Usually these built-up areas are in the immediate vicinity of stations, gasometers, electricity works, military barracks, shops, factories and ports—the latter being the favourite target of enemy bombers. I have seen with my own eyes on the Ligurian coast, which is one continuous line of human habitations—Sanpierdarena, Nervi, Santa Margherita, Rapallo, and then on right down to Spezia—coastal batteries badly camouflaged in the midst of civilian homes built facing the sea. These batteries might have fulfilled their purpose just as well on the hills to the rear of the towns, and houses would then not be exposed to the danger of attacks from the air. In my view it

is a crime to mix up military defensive works with civilian buildings in which innocent people toil and suffer in patience, as was the case in Genoa and Naples. The Germans in Naples had established their command headquarters, their barracks, their arms dumps and even their powder magazine in the very places where so many innocent creatures lived in poverty. The result was that for those helpless people, who barely knew about the existence of war there were super-added to the difficulties of eking out an existence, the agonies of terror and sometimes even the horror of a violent death.

The bombings, which had made terrible gaps in our cities and destroyed vast areas, brought as a sequel what was known as "dispersal". When I arrived in Italy the term was on everybody's lips. Dispersal is the tragic antithesis to urban congestion. It recalls the days of the sacking of Rome or of the plague in Milan, when to escape persecution or death, the people fled in terror and scattered into the neighbouring countryside. The "dispersees" are the inhabitants of the stricken cities, unable to live any longer in the midst of bombardments, either through fear or because they are homeless. Genoa, Turin, Naples and Milan, each in its turn, began to evacuate their civilian inhabitants. Nobody made any arrangements for the departure of those who fled from the bombings or for the provision of safe abodes for them. The Government took no interest in them, and the only thing it did was to set up a sort of mobile guard for the purpose of rendering help which was utterly inadequate and improvised. A financial compensation for those who suffered from the bombings worked out at 1,000 lire a head, a sum which, with the prevailing rate of values would buy at the outside a couple of pairs of shoes. There were some people who had lost all their property and even all their clothing except their night apparel.

Every head of a family had to hunt round as best he could for a shelter for his wife, his children, his old parents in some neighbouring village or farm, where they could live in comparative peace. Naturally the rich man could settle the problem with greater ease by drawing on his capital; but the ordinary wage-earner, without anything to fall back on, had

often to be satisfied with just one room for six souls or more for whom he was responsible, and to thank God for having secured such a shelter. Then the wage-earner would take the first train every morning to go to the city to his usual place of work, and in the evening, after his work was done, he would return to his family. To purchase the bare necessities of life housewives were obliged to travel to and fro between city and country in trains packed to the utmost capacity, so that it was a strenuous job even to find standing room. Often it required an acrobatic feat to get into a railway carriage by way of the window. There were always hundreds and hundreds of travellers who were quite resigned to travel the whole way standing up in cattle-trucks.

The shelters that had been provided in the cities were few and inadequate. The authorities only started building the first big shelter in Milan in the Piazza del Duomo in the spring of 1943, after the city had been half demolished in three big raids. As I travelled by all the various types of civilian transport I had an opportunity of observing the intensity of the exasperation of the people. There was nobody who did not grumble and protest. They all cursed Fascism. Apropos of this, a little incident to which I was a witness in Milan is worth telling. An old man, tired and breathless, had succeeded in boarding a moving tram. Hardly had he done so when he ejaculated with a sigh of relief: "Bon Dieu de la France!" an expression which we Italians sometimes use too, and which is an alternative for "Thank God!" Hearing his exclamation, all his fellow-travellers looked at him with an air of questioning amusement, whereupon the man turned to the person sitting beside him and volunteered this explanation in a strong provincial accent: "Yes, the God of France! That's what I said. The God of Italy does not want to listen to us any more!"

Great God! What a dreadful time we are living in! Through sheer desperation the people cast aside all restraints, and deserve forgiveness in consideration of their privations and sufferings. During the course of a bombardment of Genoa, the Food Office was hit and thousands of ration books were buried in the debris. Later on, the street arabs were

seen ferreting among the ruins and rooting out bundles of new ration books, which they sold later on at bargain prices.

The food situation in Italy became desperate the moment rationing was introduced. The rations allowed were infinitesimally small. They started with the allowance of one egg per person a week, which was later reduced to one egg per person a month. The meat ration started at 150 grammes (about 5 oz.) and later dropped to seventy. A man had to exist for a whole day on one small roll of bread. This was the greatest hardship of all, because the Italian people are great bread eaters, and can keep going without any other food provided they have bread. Potatoes were promised, but they never appeared on the market. After several months some potatoes were distributed in Rome only, but from supplies which had been rejected by the Germans as unsound. Fats had practically disappeared. Frascati wine, a local product, was unprocurable in Rome, and in the restaurants you got only a small decanter of wine diluted with water, and not even every day at that. When fruit reached the markets in the mornings, it vanished almost immediately. It is a well-known fact that whenever there is a shortage of any commodity the need for it proportionately increases and the rush to obtain it becomes frenzied. I know that in certain Roman restaurants there were special days when all one could get was a plate of boiled beans or some other cooked vegetable without any dressing of oil. Prices had not increased very much, but the quantity of rations being insufficient, all people were obliged, whether they desired to do so or not, to have recourse to the Black Market.

In no part of the world during this war has the Black Market had such a vast and maleficent development as in Italy. It was not by any means a secret traffic, for everybody spoke about it and traded in it openly. The fact that there were not many cases of death from hunger during this period was owing to mutual "arrangements" between all types of people. The technique followed was quite simple. The city worker, for instance, was obliged to buy all he could get in the country from the farmers who had big food reserves—a little fruit, a

few eggs and a little cheese at a very high price. In order to meet this expenditure, which far exceeded his normal financial assets, he had to work a lot of overtime, and make petty deals in the Black Market himself.

The organisation of food supplies had been placed by the Government in the hands of the corporative bodies and of the Federal Secretaries, who were incompetent and corrupt to the very roots of their hair. The Government had set up "accumulations," which entailed for all citizens the obligation to hand over to provincial or commercial harvest centres specified by the state all that they possessed in excess of their own proper share—for instance any flour they held in excess of their rationed allowance, and so on with other foodstuffs. Most of those who broke the regulations regarding accumulations lived in the country, and the authorities, knowing that the people in the cities used to go to the horticulturists and the rural factors to get foodstuffs that would otherwise go to the accumulations, had established controls at the customs offices, at the stations and even on the trains. When a purchaser in the Black Market was caught red-handed he was sent to the "confino", that is to say, a concentration camp set up for those who were perpetrating acts detrimental to the realm. The perfervid imagination of the Italian when he is in a tight corner is often unlimited. In Milan there lived a man who, not being able to use for his own needs the produce of his farm in Calabria, used to send from his country house to his city house every week a big parcel of what looked like clothes, but which actually contained nothing but foodstuffs. A tailor in Genoa made suits free of charge, without coupons, in exchange for pork or other foodstuffs.

Anyone who was in Italy in 1943, up to the date of the fall of Fascism, knows that in the restaurants, even when the menu offered practically nothing, one could get a good square meal by bribing the waiter and being prepared to pay a bill that was ten times the normal one. The most characteristic thing about such a deal was that it was not secret by any means; its technique was known to the high priests of Fascism, like all the other breaches of the food regulations. The miseries of

the day were the theme of general discussion, usually interlarded with a choice selection of invectives against Mussolini and the other Fascist leaders. You had only to travel from one city to another to hear some very colourful epithets showered on the Duce. The trains were always full of people with a long litany of the evils that came in the wake of Fascism, starting with the extortions of the Black Market, and ending with the horrors of the war. The war they now regarded as a hopeless enterprise. Yet nobody had anything hard to say about the Allies. In one compartment, full of travellers of a very mixed type, a soldier, who was talking in my hearing of the adventures which he went through in Africa, referred to the English with a definite enthusiastic appreciation, while he condemned Germany and her allies with crude curtness. Opposite him was sitting an officer of his own army, who listened to every word. Nor did even one of the vast crowd of travellers protest.

Our train was speeding on through the bushes of the marshy land, emerging every now and then to give glimpses of the sea between which and the railway track ran a fringe of pine trees. To divert his fellow-travellers, a man told a tale that was current about the treasure of Saint Mark's in Venice. The story ran that two gondolas met at a turning in the canal, where the gondoliers usually exchanged greetings and had a chat. One of them, named Beppe, leant over to his companion with a mysterious air as though he were the custodian of very important news: "Gigi, are you aware that the treasures of Saint Mark's have been given to Count Volpi to keep in his custody?"

"Can that really be true, Beppe?"

"Of course it's true."

Count Volpi di Misurata, of Venice, was a member of the Cabinet, and a Fascist hierarch, notorious both for having attained great wealth and for extreme avarice.

Every morning the citizens saw scrawled on the walls in Rome sketches of Mussolini with the words, "Down with Mussolini!" in heavy blocked capitals underneath. The last trace of any regard for the man who had ruled Italy for

twenty-two years had vanished. People asked one another where he was, and what was the reason that he no longer made any of his pompous speeches. It really looked as though he was deliberately avoiding them. In Government offices they said that he had retired to his Rocca delle Caminate, in the neighbourhood of Forlì. His extraordinary itch for appearing before the masses in quest of applause, seemed suddenly to have vanished.

Alarming news came from the north of Italy. In several factories the employees had gone on strike, demanding better economic conditions. The increase in wages, which had been given after prolonged negotiations between the councils and the heads of the industrial concerns, was considered by the workers rather as an insult than an improvement. They wanted better rations instead of more paper money which had almost completely lost its value. In Turin several factories had to be closed. At Sesto San Giovanni, an industrial town near Turin, the operatives in a big factory, in addition to declaring a strike, threatened to destroy the machinery. The Fascist federal secretary had the utter tactlessness to send a detachment of militia to restore order. It was like pouring oil on a fire. Serious disturbances broke out, and the situation got worse and worse. When things were at the worst a major of the Royal Carabinieri came on the scene and appealed to the strikers in cool dispassionate terms to preserve the calmness so absolutely essential at such a critical national moment. It was only then that they calmed down, and, promising that they would follow his advice, resumed work, stating that in doing so they had not the Fascist régime in their minds. Already the sharp differentiation between the Monarchy and the Government, and between the Army and the Party, which was afterwards to culminate in the appointment of Badoglio as Prime Minister, was in the process of evolution.

I found, in short, an undefinable element of disorder in the atmosphere of the nation. When I reached Capri I said to my wife: "The crisis is coming. I don't think the present state of affairs will last long. If the Allies were to land in Italy at this moment, they would find conditions more favourable for

them.' My forecast was perfectly correct. The Italian people had reached the stage when they were awaiting with impatience their own liberation with the aid of the Anglo-Saxons.

The bombings became more and more intense and heavy. Naples was bombarded for the seventieth time, I believe, while I was travelling on the line round Vesuvius towards Sorrento. In the clear bright light of the Parthenopean morning Naples, the dream city, looked battered with huge gaps of ruins yawning along the skyline of her divine crenellations. And yet, amidst this utter misery of desolation, the exquisite colour scheme peculiar to Naples, the pearly colour scheme of the crescent contours of her landscape, washed by an azure sea, stood out with pellucid clearness. The Neapolitan workmen had started the stupendous task of clearing away the wreckage which had been caused by the bombs. Birds were flitting with careless abandon among the melancholy ruins of a little church in Chiaia. All the buildings on the Via Caracciolo had their fronts badly damaged by bombs, and the glass had been shattered in every window in the city. The royal palace had been hit twice; the naval station had been levelled to the ground; the harbour had become a cemetery for ships, whose twisted funnels and splintered masts emerged above the surface of the water. The entrance to the harbour was so completely blocked up with the carcasses of ships that our little Capri steamer could not find a berth. The port itself was sadly reminiscent of Calais and Dunkirk.

Thousands of families were homeless, and forced to seek shelter in the grottoes with which the hill is honeycombed, ancient grottoes, with water dripping from the ceiling, where in times of peace, pious souls were wont to resort to pay homage to the Blessed Virgin. The people of Naples lived in these caverns for months on end. Then one day a ton bomb fell at the entrance to one of them, shattering the hill and burying some hundreds of people. There was an explosion on a tanker at the entrance to the harbour the repercussion of which caused dreadful havoc far and wide. Motor-cars carried by another ship which blew up in the harbour were

hurled, like chaff carried by the wind, on to the roofs of houses in Naples.

My boy had spent night after night in Capri, watching from our terrace which faced the sea the flights of Lancasters making for Naples, flying very low over the island. No bomb fell on Capri, despite the fact that we had in the island a few anti-aircraft guns, whose sites were childishly selected, and quite visible from above, notwithstanding the camouflage.

The English and American bombers changed their objectives from night to night. It was obvious that their zone of action extended from the South along the Tyrrhenian coast on a line parallel to the Appenines right up to Liguria. They started bombing Civita Vecchia on several nights in succession, and afterwards Grosseto, Leghorn and Spezia. In Spezia I saw where the station had been literally cut in two, but for all that the trains continued their journey—only at a reduced speed, and they were very much later than their time-table. In Leghorn the arsenal was hit, and on the following day Ciano came to tell us of the damage done to his city. In broad daylight they dropped hundreds of bombs in the pine-forest of Viareggio. The reason for the attack was later on revealed. It was owing to the fact that a German motorised column had halted in the pine-forest. The English had evidently marvelously good information, the only snag about it being that their raid was a few hours late, as the column was on its way before the bombs fell.

Faced with this unchallenged dropping of bombs along the peninsula and the feelings of panic with which the people reacted to it, the Fascist Government hit upon the notion of inventing explosive fountain-pens. The newspapers talked about fountain-pens and lipsticks for ladies which the Allied airmen had dropped among the cities of Central and Southern Italy in order that they might explode in the hands of those who picked them up. There were front-page illustrations of babies killed in this way, and an appeal was made for the world's verdict on these alleged atrocities. Mussolini imitated Hitler's technique in trying to bring odium on his opponents. But after some time this propaganda campaign fizzled out,

and nobody any longer referred to the explosive pens, because, starting with the Italian people themselves, everybody saw that it was just a mere fabrication.

There was a good deal of talk about proclaiming Rome an "open city". It was realised, of course, that Rome might one day become a target for the R.A.F. The Fascist Government would be very glad to proclaim Rome an open city, more, I believe, through the anxiety of the hierarchs of the Party and all the other high-placed officials than to save from destruction imperishable archæological monuments, churches and museums, which contained priceless treasures. But nothing was done, because the Germans insisted on keeping in the city all their military and diplomatic headquarters. The German command, as I observed, had not only reserved a large number of rooms in the Roman hotels for the German officials passing through, or resident in Rome, but they were now in the habit of posting on their walls the orders of the day in the German language, just as if they were in barracks. The office of the German military attaché, who could not make up his mind to forgo the amenities of the city, had become a second Ministry of War. The majority of the members of the garrison and the German officers had taken complete possession of the town of Frascati near Rome. The question of making Rome an "open city" continued unanswered notwithstanding the persistence of the Vatican in raising it again and again, and the pressure brought to bear in support of its plea.

On various occasions there were incidents which showed the exasperation and indignation of the people. There were fights, for instance, at public meetings or in the streets, between Italians and German soldiers. This was invariably occasioned by the provocative attitude of the Germans. One such scene took place in a train between officers of the Italian army and representatives of the Wehrmacht, and the Germans were ordered to leave the vehicle on the charge of a breach of the laws of hospitality. A leading Italian official took the opportunity to express his anxiety about the state of tension that existed between the people and the German soldiers.

On one occasion when delivering a speech in a Roman social centre, Signor Guariglia, who had been an Ambassador, expressed very courageous opinions with regard to the policy of the Axis, in words which were calculated to produce a profound impression in political circles. He put his finger on the sore spot when he asserted that it had been a fatal error to drag Italy into a path which served German interests alone. As Guariglia was highly esteemed in diplomatic circles and held a position of great repute there was no unpleasant sequel to his outburst against the Germans.

On another occasion, during the course of a Fascist meeting, Bottai, the Cabinet Minister, had to cease talking owing to the frenzied interruptions of the audience, who bawled: "Fork out your millions! We want to see the millions you've got!" Bottai made futile attempts to explain that he was not a millionaire.

A rumour went the rounds that they had thrashed Mario Appellius, but when I met him in the office of the Stefani Agency he showed his usual effrontery and vented his venom against the English and the Americans, declaring, among other things that he would remain faithful to the Italian lira, even if its rate of exchange had fallen so low that it became worthless. For myself, however, I am convinced that Mario had put by a fairly considerable sum of foreign money as special correspondent of the *Popolo d'Italia*. But it was a sight worth seeing to watch his ferocious frown whenever he spoke about Churchill. When and why this Italian journalist with the strange name and the mysterious origin became such a pro-German and champion of Mussolini I could not say. I am told, however, that during his career as a travelling journalist he took some extraordinary liberties with facts. They say, for instance, that during the war in the west, he coolly invented for the *Popolo d'Italia*, a naval battle on the Zuidersee, a vivid description of which he wrote while sitting in his arm-chair in a hotel in Brussels. I know quite well that later on, when he was in safety in Switzerland, he continued to describe battlefields which he had never seen.

From observing such an unhealthy form of society, a form

so corrupt and so unnatural as well as from the expression of outraged popular feeling, I deduced that there would be a revolution in Italy sooner or later. The most my imagination could conjure up was a kind of internal revolution for the purpose of scattering the whole band of Mussolini's confederates even without throwing him too out of his saddle. I could picture to myself a sort of a Saint Bartholomew's Night for the elimination of those whom the voice of the people pointed out as the war profiteers and the blood-suckers of the nation. Putting it bluntly, could it be explained how one of these hierarchs, who started in 1924 as a simple official of the Fascist Federation, should in 1943, that is to say, barely nineteen years later, have managed to pick up the neat fortune of 300,000,000 lire? Incidentally, it is interesting that these men who attained wealth through Fascism began to reproach one another for the wealth they had picked up.

At a pre-arranged moment Mussolini appointed Carlo Scorza of Lucca, formerly a member of the Directory, and known for his excellent relations with the Brown House in Munich, as General Secretary of the Party. Hardly had Scorza taken up office, when he made a gesture of desiring to introduce a little order into the ranks by adopting a policy that appeared puritanical. To this end he published very draconian circulars, but he did not succeed in securing the adoption of a system of Socratic life on the part of the chief exponents of the Party. Nazi technique was discernible in the plan adopted by him for the purpose of reorganising the Fascist ranks. He put notices in the papers that he was moving from the sumptuous Palazzo Littorio, the seat of the Party on the outskirts of Rome, to Piazza Colonna in the heart of the city, in order to have continuously under his eye the herd entrusted to his direction and supervision. His purpose was to give the impression that the régime of simony was ended, and that from that moment the nation would be ruled with greater justice and seriousness.

Even granting that this repentance was genuine, it was belated. The Italian people could no longer be deceived. Their tolerance had reached the limit. To the minister,

Polverelli, who asked what impression had been made on me by those few days I had spent in Italy, I had to reply candidly, "The impression of a country dominated by corruption and lack of conscience. If things go on like this, collapse is certain." As though to substantiate this view, Morgagni, when saying good-bye to me before I left for Stockholm, said, "Days of hardship are ahead for Italy!"

If I had only known! Our peninsula seemed to me to have lapsed into a more chaotic and serious plight than in 1921, when, owing to the activities of the Communists, there were strikes and industrial troubles all over Italy. Our people seemed to me to be on the point of awakening from a comatose condition to drift right into rebellion. Had the Allies, during those days, kept up a more intensive system of bombing throughout the peninsula, the purge would have come earlier, perhaps even in June. Paradoxical though it might appear, those bombings, lamentable as they were, inasmuch as they took such a toll of human lives, seemed after all, to have a salutary effect as they helped to arouse the numbed conscience of the Italian people, which had been weighed down for twenty years under the Fascist yoke. The masses never referred to Fascism now, except to curse it. The régime made desperate efforts to defend itself through the proclamations issued by Scorza. One got the impression of a mortally wounded snake whose head and tail, in a last convulsive twitching, might still seem to retain a little life. Even if Mussolini at that moment had made any effort whatsoever to regain his country's confidence he would not have succeeded, because the damage that had been done was irreparable. But he did nothing. He did not even appear in public, nor did he give the slightest indication of interest in what was happening.

On July 10 the two dictators north and south of the Brenner Pass must have felt as though they were turned to stone. What they had thought impossible, had actually occurred. The Allies had landed in Sicily. By their successful landing the Anglo-American armies had shattered the myth that the continent was impregnable. Once they set foot in Sicilian territory the Allies had invaded Europe. The man who thought

himself greater than Charlemagne as he ruled from his headquarters must for the first time have been uneasy—to say nothing of his shadow in Italy, Mussolini, who certainly must have felt the ground on which he stood giving way. All attempts to hurl back Eisenhower's armies were in vain. The Allies kept broadening more and more the bridgehead which they had made until they had completely conquered the island.

Hitler and Mussolini most decidedly did not foresee that the Sicilians would receive the English and Americans not as enemies but as brothers. There were heads of local bodies who conveyed to their liberators the feelings of gratitude of the people whom they represented. Italian officers and men threw away their arms and surrendered, not through cowardice but because they were waiting for that climax for a long time.

At that terrible moment Mussolini knew that his cause was irretrievably ruined. Fascist Government circles lost their heads. The only measure they could adopt was to hide from the public the ovation given by the Sicilians to the Allies by deliberately stating the exact opposite to what actually occurred, and asserting that the people of the island "had heroically resisted the enemy". Afterwards, when it was no longer possible to suppress the truth, they declared that Sicily's healthy patriotic instincts had been corrupted by separatist elements. The reports that Kesselring sent to Berlin about the attitude of the Italian soldiers and people, and on the military situation in general, caused the German Government to look upon the war from that moment as an exclusively German affair, without counting any further on Italian support. It was reported from various sources that Kesselring advocated the occupation of every part of the peninsula by German troops so that they could have a free hand in preparing the defensive measures that were necessary to halt the advance of the Allies.

It is very important to make clear that the idea of an occupation of Italy, perhaps merely on military grounds, occurred to the Germans when they saw that the Italian people were no longer on their side, and that Mussolini had lost all control

over the nation. Berlin pretended to justify this occupation by asserting that it was forced on Germany unexpectedly by the conclusion of the armistice which Badoglio signed. But despite all German contentions to the contrary, the occupation was planned in advance.

As for the Italian people, they had such an intuition about the perfidious intentions of their alleged ally that they were anxious that the English and American forces should not lose time in continuing at high speed their advance in Italy. This attitude was the reaction of the sufferings endured by the Italian people during years of mortification. There was no town throughout all Italy which did not feel a thrill of renewed hope and courage in hearing that the Allies were on our soil.

Mussolini was obliged to invite Hitler to a new conference, which was held in secret at Feltre. No bulletin was issued after their meeting. The two chiefs disputed for three hours over a problem which had no solution. Mussolini demanded more generous military assistance, failing which he claimed that the peninsula could not hold out. He and Hitler vied with one another in abusing the Italian Army, and the generals in particular, whom they described as either incompetent or saboteurs. Mussolini added that Germany, after all, had the same interests as Fascism in fighting for the Italian peninsula, the anti-chamber of Central Europe. But Hitler replied that he could not withdraw any troops from other fronts. Mussolini pleaded and threatened, but to no purpose. Meanwhile the Allies had already crossed the Straits of Messina, and were advancing in Calabria.

The rest belongs to the history which is known to all. A party comprising high grade officials of Fascism had been formed in Italy, it is not clear whether unknown to Mussolini or not, but at any rate without the people having any voice in it. Its chief spokesmen were Dino Grandi, President of the Chamber of Fascists and of the Corporations, and formerly Ambassador to London; and Luigi Federzoni, ex-Nationalist and President of the Royal Academy. It is not known who were the other constituent members of this group, but it seems certain that among them were the two surviving quad-

rumvirs of the march on Rome, Marshal de Bono and Signor de Vecchi, the Cabinet Minister, as well as Signor Bottai, Minister of Education, and various heads of the Fascist confederations. For some time since the fall of Tunis this group had tried to prevail on Mussolini to summon the Grand Council of Fascism, which, next to the Crown, was the chief factor of the Constitution. But Mussolini would not hear of it, insisting that in wartime discussions by the members of the Grand Council were both superfluous and inopportune.

The group renewed their efforts when the Allies landed in Calabria, but once again Mussolini was obdurate. In taking this stand, he was acting unconstitutionally, for it was the absolute right—and even the duty—of the Grand Council, as the chief organ of the Constitution and as the supreme tribunal of the Party, to express its views on a question which concerned the life or death of the nation. The names of the two movers of the proposal to summon the Grand Council, Grandi and Federzoni, should not have raised suspicion in Mussolini, as they were old Fascists who had always been faithful to the cause, but he was afraid.

On the Duce's return from the meeting at Feltre, Grandi succeeded in convincing him of the need of the proposed summons of the Council, declaring that it would be in the interests of the Duce himself, as the Grand Council would be in a position to help him to regain his lost prestige.

The Grand Council met on July 25. Mussolini, so the chronicles say, entered the chamber with a challenging expression on his countenance, determined to exterminate his opponents. He spoke for several hours, giving an account of his conversation with the Fuehrer and making a statement on the military situation. When he spoke offensively about the army, Marshal de Bono arose, red in the face, and, taking a revolver out of his pocket, he placed it before him on the table, shouting: "I won't permit any references to the army." But Mussolini went on talking, and took no notice of the old quadrumvir. He said that he had not succeeded in inducing Hitler to send reinforcements for the defence of Southern Italy, which he now proposed to abandon to the enemy in

order to concentrate resistance in Central and Northern Italy. The sacrifice of Calabria, Puglia, Lucania and Campania seemed inevitable, in order to avert a greater loss. He was convinced that the enemy could be checked on the Apennines in Latium and Abbruzzi, and even ambushed. He did not seek a vote of confidence, because under Fascism, it is not the custom.

I followed the discussion, which became more stormy and tensely dramatic from minute to minute. The newspapers have reported Grandi's terrible indictment and the observations made by others such as Ciano and de Vecchi. Beside himself with frenzy, Mussolini, interrupted each of them. To Grandi he said, "How often have you come to me begging me to give you new titles of nobility?" He taunted Ciano with these words, "I had a suspicion that you were a traitor from the moment when you entered my family." Meanwhile he kept tapping a document which he had in front of him in which, according to his assertion there was sufficient evidence to send everyone of his adversaries to the galleys. Pareschi, the Cabinet Minister, fainted clean away. De Vecchi kept shouting, "I knew that Mussolini would ruin us all."

Just then an usher tip-toed into the chamber and whispered in the ear of Bottai, the Cabinet Minister, that he was wanted on the phone. Bottai rose and left the chamber, an incident which sufficed to make Federzoni suspicious. He scribbled a hurried note which he handed round to his friends. It ran, "Look out. They are preparing to do us in."

At the beginning of the session Roberto Farinacci had moved that the Grand Council should be requested to decide that the general command of all operations in Italy should be entrusted to the Germans. During the course of the discussion he never opened his mouth, nor did he rise to elaborate his proposal, but, taking advantage of the uproar around him, seized the opportunity of leaving the chamber by a narrow staircase which had been reserved for the Duce. It transpired later on that he hurriedly fled to the German Embassy where arrangements were made to enable him to get away to Munich by a German plane.

A vote was taken on Grandi's motion and passed, requesting Mussolini to resign his authority into the hands of the King.

It seems pretty clear that up to the very moment of his arrest, which took place after his conference with the King, Mussolini thought he could master the situation. His whole attitude during the meeting of the Grand Council and during his altercation with the King showed that he thought himself strong enough to come out on top. He paid no attention to the Grand Council vote, and when Victor Emmanuel informed him that he had appointed Badoglio in his place as Prime Minister, still kept up his defiant attitude, as though he was in a position to assert his own authority. Apparently, he depended on the police and the militia, two forces which were decidedly powerful, and might be regarded as a supplementary army to the regular army.

But Fate had evidently abandoned Mussolini for good and all. The message which had been telegraphed by Galbiati, Commander-in-Chief of the Militia, a member of the Grand Council and fully trusted by the Duce, to all branches of the force to consider themselves as mobilised to come to Mussolini's aid, was intercepted by Senise, the police chief, who substituted for it one which gave exactly the contrary order—namely to obey Marshal Badoglio's orders from that moment.

The very last scene had a melodramatic tinge. The whim of destiny decided that Mussolini's crash should come a few days before his birthday. Unaware of what had happened, Hitler sent him, as on other occasions, a birthday present. This time it was an edition of Nietzsche, the German philosopher who had evolved the idea of the Superman, and whom Mussolini had throughout his life kept before his mind as an evangelist.

And so, after twenty-two years of undisputed authority a great man came to an abrupt end, as ignominiously as a thief laid by the heels just after he has picked a pocket. The Duce was arrested on leaving the Royal Palace, thrown into a car and imprisoned in a barracks in Rome. Nobody made the slightest protest. The Party made no move. For the rest, if we wish to go to the root of the matter it was the Party itself

that overthrew him and in a most constitutional manner, after that meeting of the Grand Council. If he was arrested, it was because, despite the sovereign decision of the supreme organisation of the régime created by himself, he refused to resign. Mussolini himself asserted that his fall was the result of a plot. That was not true. He fell, branded by the stigma of condemnation by the Party.

The nation saw this man fall without shedding a tear, and without showing the slightest trace of pity. It was well for the dictator that the nation took no part in his dethronement, although even so it still has the right to speak on the issue.

Chapter XII

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

EVENTS after the crisis of July 25 moved at a precipitous pace. The most important and epoch-making incident was the armistice with the Allies signed by Marshal Badoglio on September 3 and proclaimed to the people on September 8. This armistice echoed the feelings of the whole nation. The only pity was that it was not made sooner—that is to say, immediately after the downfall of Mussolini. Had that been the case, the Italian people would have been spared the painful experiences of the revenge which Germany subsequently took.

The headlong collapse of Mussolini and of Fascism meant the unexpected and inglorious end of the Axis, and likewise a slap in the face for Hitler and the Nazis, who saw in the disappearance of the Fascists the removal of a handy instrument for the exercise of their domination over Italy. The Axis, as the Italians learned later, had no other aim but that of obedience to the obscure aims of German expansion. By means of the Axis Hitler was in a position to blackmail Italy. From the day on which Fascism started to imitate the goose-step of Hitler's Brown Shirts, it was nothing more than a servile accomplice in the conspiracy against Europe. But now all that was at an end.

There was more involved, however, than the end of the Duce's régime. The unexpected collapse of Mussolini showed the brittleness of dictatorships of the Fascist type which were self-styled dynamic institutions—a brittleness that was demonstrated in the fact that they were always on the look-out for adventures and for war. It is easy to discern in Mussolini's collapse a stern warning to the Nazis and their leader, who might come to the same end as the Fascists did.

These were the joint motives that caused Hitler to hurl himself with diabolical frenzy on the festering and bleeding

body of Italy in order to rend it to pieces. He cynically tried to justify his occupation of Northern and Central Italy on the grounds of the armistice which had been secretly concluded by Badoglio. But the world must know by now that the occupation on which Hitler had decided a long time previously, would have come, even had there never been an armistice. The material reasons for such an occupation had long been in existence, and only awaited the logical deduction. The ground was prepared; all the Italian bases had been in German hands for over six months. Sicily was occupied. Naples had become their fortress. Furthermore, Mussolini invited Hitler to send anti-aircraft divisions into Northern Italy and the rest of the peninsula in 1942. This was the climax to the complete absorption of Italy in the German defensive organisation. When he could no longer avoid doing so, Hitler threw away the mask, and all he had to do was to reinforce the garrisons already in existence. As a crowning insult he appointed Rommel commander of the Italian defence.

It is a mistake to think that there was any altruistic purpose in all that Hitler has done and is still doing to restore Mussolini and Fascism to power, not even the dramatic incident of the liberation of Mussolini. Hitler's aim was twofold—to keep the Anglo-Saxons as long as possible from German territory, and to humiliate Italy.

Italy in these days has assumed the appearance of a vast area of wreckage which the murderous engines of war continue to batter persistently. There has been a reversion to the Middle Ages, when the peninsula was the theatre of battles between armies that were not of Italian nationality; but while the army advancing from the South under the British and American flags, has undertaken a task of liberation, the other, coming down from the North, is inspired merely by a sadistic, savage and sanguinary thirst for destruction.

This task which aims at turning Italy into one vast necropolis was at first under the direction of Rommel, who carried out operations from his headquarters at Sirmione. There are unfortunately, still some Fascist renegades who abet this zest for devastation. It seems obvious, however, from the tone

adopted in recent times by Nazi propaganda, that the Germans now place very slender hopes in the resurrected Fascist movement which Mussolini has been pleased to call a republican one, in order to wreak vengeance on the House of Savoy. This anti-monarchical tendency is not astonishing, for at heart Mussolini has always been opposed to the ruling house. In later years he jealously treasured in his heart the determination to overthrow the dynasty when the opportune moment should come. Nevertheless, he owed his whole career as a statesman to the House of Savoy, for had it not been for the assent of Victor Emmanuel on that far off day in October, 1922, when he made his so-called march on Rome, Mussolini would never have risen to power and become head of the State. And the only return that Victor Emmanuel gets to-day for all this is to be branded a traitor by Mussolini, and all the other princes of the House of Savoy are held up to public scorn by him. He kept a particularly suspicious and jealous eye on the Crown Prince, knowing that he was destined to succeed his father, who was getting on in years.

On one occasion when Mussolini was speaking on the radio in Munich, he insinuated that Prince Humbert had not been even once at the front. Among all the mobilised divisions of our army it is well known that this statement is libellous. On one occasion the Crown Prince actually escaped death by a sheer miracle during an inspection in Calabria, when his car was struck by a shell which killed his orderly, while he got off without a scratch. Mussolini was in the habit of referring to the Princess of Piedmont, Prince Humbert's wife and sister of King Leopold of Belgium, who is now a refugee in Switzerland, as "the intriguer". The Fascist Republicans accused her of having plotted, in concert with Badoglio, against the Duce and against Fascism. If this is true, the Italian nation owes a debt of gratitude to the Princess of Piedmont.

The little comedy that had been staged at the liberation of Mussolini and the resurrection of Fascism, was destined to be of short duration. One even gets the impression that the Germans soon began to tire of it, and realised its futility.

After his fall Mussolini no longer existed except for the very

small number of men who stubbornly proclaimed themselves his followers, most of them being haunted by the dread of the inevitable punishment that awaited them for their serious crimes. The Duce was an irremediably broken man. It was not only his ailments and mental worries that made a physical wreck of him, it was worse than that—he became an utter moral wreck. Had I not known the man personally, I would not make these assertions, but as his disposition, his nature and his mentality were well known to me, I believe that Mussolini, as soon as he lost his spiritual and moral driving forces, became a mere automaton, a puppet in the hands of those whose interest it was to foster the illusion that he was still able to be a menace. Those who pulled the strings to make the puppet dance were the Nazis and a few Fascist leaders.

For instance, there was Roberto Farinacci, the most prejudiced of all the satraps of the Littorio, the man who, in the middle of the stormy session of the Grand Council on July 25, decamped by stealth, and placed himself under the protection of the German Embassy. He was the only one to whom such an idea occurred, the only one who went to the length of proposing that the supreme command of the war in Italy should be entrusted to the Germans. While almost all the others placed themselves under the jurisdiction of the Badoglio Government, Farinacci was safe in Germany, only returning to his native Cremona when he was certain that with the presence of the Germans his skin was no longer in danger.

I have notes of the journeys Farinacci had made so frequently to Germany, as far back as 1939, as well as the contacts he made with the Nazi Government offices—often without any authorisation from Rome. He constituted himself, indeed, a second Minister of Foreign Affairs, an "outside" one, as Ribbentrop had once been in Germany, before he actually entered the offices of the Wilhelmstrasse. In my view, Farinacci is a man who entertains hopes that he will succeed to the dictatorship in the event of Mussolini disappearing. For the time being he has to lie low, because he cannot yet show his hand, and is not sufficiently popular among the few Fascists still left.

Another man actuated by the surge of ambition, as well as of personal rancour, is Marshal Graziani, who may be summarily dismissed as being as much a physical and moral ruin as Mussolini. He has decided to fight for Fascism, not through love of it, but merely that he may be in the opposite camp to Badoglio, whom he envies and detests.

As I write this the Italian people are still undergoing terrible sufferings. It is agonising even to think of what is going on in my country at this very moment. Thousands of Italians are forced to live in hiding in order to avoid arrest by the Nazis, and being sent to concentration camps in Germany. They comprise soldiers who have been left without officers, civilians who have tried to check the murderous design of the German army of occupation, and members of the intelligentsia who have always fought against every manifestation of Fascism. Their only escape is to hide in the valleys of the Appenines, in the crags of the Alps, their clothes in tatters, and depending on the peasants to fetch them, at the risk of their own lives, enough food to keep body and soul together. The risk these peasants run is a sterling testimony to the character of the Italian people. They show their solidarity with the fugitive patriots who are hiding from the German bullies, but they evince no trace of sympathy with the Fascist chiefs whom Badoglio, as a tribute to justice, was forced to send to prison.

To give some idea of the inventive genius of the Italian in the epic fight which he wages in these days against oppression the following episode will suffice. Before the coming of the Allies, the people of Naples collected arms secretly in order to drive the Germans out of their city. In view of the rigorous scrutiny which the Germans exercised over every movement of the civilian population, these arms were usually conveyed to their destination in coffins, and the Germans never suspected that when they saw a funeral passing through the streets of Naples, it was really a consignment of rifles and hand-grenades on their way to a secret destination.

After Naples had been set free by the Allies, the Nazi bullies transferred their campaign of torture and pillage in the

direction of Rome. As I write, a letter from a mother to her son who lives abroad, has been handed to me. Among other things it says: "Our lives have become a real hell, we have absolutely nothing left to us. The Germans take everything for themselves. This morning ten more waggon-loads of flour were sent from our neighbourhood to Germany. All this flour given to us by the good God is taken from us, and the latest thing we hear is that the bread ration in Germany has been increased. In order to keep their jobs, Italians who are not Fascists are forced, under penalty of arrest, to sign a declaration of fidelity to Fascism and to Mussolini. They have taken a number of our best men to Germany. They have filled the prisons. And then they leave us without anything. They say that we shall have no coal this winter. Under these conditions, deprived as we are of everything and above all, of our liberty, all we can do is to stay in bed, and, if the Allies do not come in time—wait for death!"

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